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The
LIFE OF
A WOMAN

BY
R. V. RISLEY



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Risley

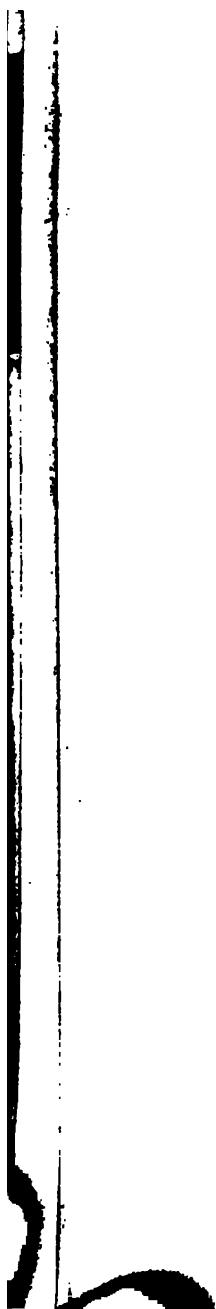
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The Life of a Woman



1776
The
LIFE *of a* WOMAN

BY
R. V. RISLEY
AUTHOR OF "MEN'S TRAGEDIES," ETC.



CHICAGO
HERBERT S. STONE & COMPANY
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I DEDICATE THIS
BOOK TO HER FOR
WHOM IT WAS WRIT-
TEN IN VAIN.

NEW YORK, *Midsummer, 1902*

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The Life of a Woman

CHAPTER I

PROPHECY

Barbara Tappan was born at Hilltop, New Jersey, a residence village twenty-one miles from New York. Her mother died a year later and her father, the Reverend Louis Tappan, retired to live on his comfortable inherited income when the only child was five years old.

The house stood on an elevation outside the town; a blue-stone drive (never ground smooth), ran up across one corner of the lawn past terraced clumps of hemlocks, broadened under the porte-cochère, and wound away past the swing and the kitchen entrance in the back to the clap-boarded barn in the hollow by the chicken-houses.

The house was too big for the old recluse student and the shy girl; its gayety of paint of yellow and brown—though somewhat faded—seemed to mock the dreamy simpleness of their lives. As one lay in the coloured cord hammock on the honeysuckle-screened piazza, one looked across, over the dusty road below, on an upward sloping waste of uncultivated fields topped by the woods that stood black against the tarnished yellow of the sunset.

Away towards the left were the newer villas of the country neighbours, the Queen Anne gables rising above the blue-gray, drooping spires of the larches that shadowed them; below, to the right, a tumble-down blacksmith-shop dirtied the ditched brook by the other side of the road.

Behind the house, sloping upward again from the hollow where the rain-water always collected in the autumn and spring, spread the wire-fenced garden, its neglected paths overrun with creepers of cucumber and pumpkin vines; the rasp-

berry bushes were almost crowded out by the overgrowth of weedy Sweet Williams; towards the top some weatherbeaten lima-bean poles sagged drunkenly.

Beyond the kitchen door the swing swung from its cross piece firmly fixed between the embracing limbs of the twin, huge poplars; the ropes creaked in the wind, frightening the chickens that pecked for worms beneath the sheep-sorrel. All the lazy afternoon Barbara could hear, from where she lay in her hammock on the piazza dreaming over one of her father's old classics, the mournful, half-sinister creak of those worn old swing-ropes, broken, occasionally, by a momentary snatch of strident song from the Irish cook peeling the dinner potatoes in the kitchen.

The old house was gloomy in the autumn twilight; as one entered the oak-wainscotted hall through the coloured glass door the light of the smouldering logs in the fireplace scarce served to reveal the broad stairs at the back in the shadow; the library entrance was

only a square of black upon a curtain of gloom; but, sometimes, if one approached stealthily, one could catch a glimpse of a red reading lamp, beside which bowed, in the recesses of the room of books, a slim delicate, white-haired old man, muttering aloud in that hushed sanctuary the soft syllables of the Horace he was reading.

The dining-room might have been cheerful, with its banked stands of ferns, but its low, wide windows looked towards the sunset; and in the mornings—even in the spring—it was dark and cold, and in the dusk the walls were iridescent as a rainbow with the refracted colours of the west.

Barbara's room upstairs was a huge chamber, prettily furnished, with a French window door opening out upon the roofed-over, second-story, little piazza above the porte-cochère; her father's room was next to hers and she could, when she lay awake at night, hear him come wearily up the creaking stairs from his books and softly enter his

bed-chamber, fearful to disturb the slumber of the daughter he loved and neglected.

She was always a shy girl; without mother, or family, other than her revery-enraptured old father, she had never learned the light-hearted habit of comradeship, and, as the years passed, gradually took on the old gentleman's dreamy and alien manner and lost herself in the hush of his old books and almost forgot the wavering reveries of the girl.

Some of the good women of the neighbourhood tried to make friends with her and talked with her about her housekeeping duties, and, being kind and considerate she heeded them, and cared for the old gentleman wisely, managing finances and household affairs with a certain demure and quiet competence, which forever hid her success from her father—which she had the wisdom to feel was her greatest reward.

By the time she was sixteen she had nearly grown out of the daze; she still read more than the other girls, and there

was come into her eyes for all time a certain dreamy and distant look, as of one who is seeing things beyond what is visible to their literal vision; but the old childish, half-melancholy was gone—save in transient moods at twilight, when she turned quickly to the lamp-lit rooms for relief from what she scarcely realized was a passed but not lived-out self.

Her shy common sense had won her a place in the hearts of her neighbours, and now her growing prettiness gained for her the interest which beauty always excites even among women. As her life broadened with her widening horizon of thought and acquaintanceship, the demureness changed from the consciousness of ignorance to that coquettish demureness of provocation instead of simplicity; the brown eyes, in place of their wide-open and steadfast childishness, now half shut in their laughter, and the mouth deepened at the corners, and grew more sensitive; she discarded straight-fronted dresses and ventured to attempt a little lacing, while her hair was still in a great,

curly, wild-ended braid thrown over one shoulder.

She poured her father's coffee now in the mornings, commanding the maid with the air of a great lady; and when her household ordering was arranged, departed to her French teacher in the village, returning to preside over the old man's lunch—(smiling lovingly at him when he glanced up at her from the volume which lay by his plate)—to afterward spend a long afternoon poring over the studies she had set for herself.

Between her sixteenth and seventeenth birthdays came her awaking out of the last phases of childhood.

Perhaps Autran had as much to do with it as anyone. He was a friend of her father's youth—though ten years younger at least—not over fifty—and a year before he had drifted into their family with such a simplicity of fatigue and with such a certainness of welcome, that she hardly remembered that "Uncle Autran" had ever been other than a part of her life. A man of considerable wealth, he had

worn out in Paris the zest of an unmentioned youth, and now, weary of gayety and too blasé to care any longer to pose as the roué, he had wandered for a time into the enchanted circle of his friend's dream, drowsing over his silent thoughts and resting from his memories.

He would sit in the spring afternoons silently on his camp-stool on the fragrant piazza near Barbara's hammock, tiredly touching the ashes from his cigarette, careful of his immaculate white linen trousers, watching her with an half-ironical sadness, his white hair shading his eyes. The girl never realized how much she would have missed the quizzical eyeglass, the whimsical, kindly tone, the unboasting forethought for a woman's ease—a forethought learned in she never comprehended what unmentionable schools.

It was Autran who payed her her first compliment.

She had been busy for days with the country dressmaker, locked in her room, preparing the dress for her first party. Upon the great night she had snatched a

hasty dinner and rushed upstairs with the seamstress. In half an hour there was a hurried call for the maid to render her assistance.

In the dim library the old father leaned oblivious over his books, lost in the sweet revery of the ancient poetry of other times and tongues; Autran waiting in his spotless evening clothes at the foot of the great stairs—he was to have the honour of escorting her to the dance and calling for her again afterward—only Autran felt in the air that tense vibration which quivers in one's waiting senses before some event momentous and significant to someone one knows and loves. He sighed as he stood there; then laughing a little bitterly at his sigh—a laugh instantly checked behind the hand that stroked his white imperial—he crossed over in the shadows to the fire, bent carefully on one knee, and relit his cigarette at the blaze. As he knelt, looking into the embers, his mind wandered back over the many differing years that were gone, to the old faces, the old laughs and seasons, to

the crowded and shadowy play on which he had wasted his life of forgetfulness——

"I will go back," he said, half aloud.

He stretched himself out in the great chair by the hearth and yawned.

Meanwhile, in her chamber above, the girl was standing waiting for her first party-gown to be put on her. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement, her eyes glowed with the sombre fire of a wild, repressed gayety in the wavering yellow light of the candles, her strong young shoulders shivered in their novel barrenness, then blushed as she glanced at her reflection in the great glass with that conscious but only half-realized sensuousness which even the purest of women possess about themselves if they are women. She could have been passionate over herself if she had known what it meant.

The two women approached with the gown; there was a rustle of silk as they fastened it about her—a chorus of exclamations of delight. As she gazed at herself in the mirror her gay young laugh rang out with pure enjoyment. The man

waiting below in the flickering shadows of the firelight heard it and smiled once more his old, ironic, half-sad smile; the student over his books heard nothing, repeating in his soft, ancient voice the sonorous syllables of the Latin hymn of the "Dies Irae" that he loved.

Now came the jewels—a necklace and earrings of pearls; they felt cold as the women slipped them on her. Her hair was dressed high on her head and bound with yellow.

At last she was ready, her long gloves half on, her huge feathered fan slung at her side on its ribbon. With one last farewell glance at the mirror she opened her door and stepped down the stairs, the two women craning their heads over the banisters.

Autran met her at the foot of the steps. She remembered in after years his silence. Then he handed her the great bunch of yellow orchids he had prepared to surprise her, bowing with his ironical air.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" he murmured.

"For the first time I regret my fifty years!"

She laughed, and turning from him, ran in to kiss her father good-night.

He patted her head.

"'Dies irae, dies illa,'" he muttered, returning to his dreamy hymn. "Be a good girl—'solvat seclum in favilla'—be a good girl—quite so, yes, yes, child—good-night. 'Teste David cum Sybilla'!"

Autran drove home half-sneering in the carriage after leaving her at her hostess's door, and sat till one o'clock in the great chair in front of the hearth in silence except for his one word of good-night to the old student who groped his way up the stairs bedward, candle in hand. After a time the fire died down to a few glowing embers—to ashes. The fragments of innumerable cigarettes littered the fireplace. Through his half-dream half-revery there kept running the echo of the sad waltz music which had drifted out to him as he bid her *au revoir* on the steps, with the gay lights behind

her as she had turned to face the darkness —“sweet dreamland faces” the words ran. He lit another cigarette and smiled at his sentimentality.

He was awakened from his mood by the crunch of the carriage wheels on the drive-way outside under the portecochère; he got up, shrugged gingerly into his black French opera coat and went out to fulfill his duty of escort.

After a long wait she came to the door among a crowd of weary, laughing girls. He led her down the steps and helped her into the carriage; she was so tired that, once away from the music, her fatigue fell upon her like a burden. With a long sigh she closed her eyes; her head sank on his shoulder.

“Oh—Uncle Autran!” she murmured. “I am so happy!”

“There, child!” he whispered.

When at last the carriage stopped at their own door, he had to almost lift her out, the girl was so sleepy.

“You are only a child!” he murmured, touching her, almost timidly, on the arm

for one moment as she stood on the first step of the stairs.

"Good-night, Uncle Autran!" she said, leaning on the banisters. "You have been so kind."

He seated himself once more in the great chair, and again the fragments of cigarettes began to accumulate on the now fireless hearth.

CHAPTER II

HALLOWE'EN

It was at this time that Barbara made her first close girl friend.

A half mile away down the road to the left, in an old mansion lost among huge oak trees, lived the Wyeth family, the old widowed lawyer, Myron Wyeth, his two taciturn, grown-up, lawyer sons, and Bess Marguerite, the daughter of sixteen.

She was an adorably pretty girl, always wild-haired and usually torn-skirted, a madcap, a flirt, and a tomboy, with the spirit of a game-cock and the most chivalrous heart in the world. Having two brothers, they had taught her a certain boyishness of comradeship which Barbara's more exclusively feminine manner lacked, yet her sheer girlishness being so buoyantly debonair, Bess Marguerite was the least masculine thing possible. Her

brown eyes, in place of the honesty of Barbara's, were roguish with constant hint of coquetry, and her mouth, less whimsically appreciative, was more ready for self-forgetful laughter.

Everybody called her Bess Marguerite; the piquancy and bohemian flirtatiousness of the name suited her.

She and one other were Barbara's comrades—the one her devil of mischief, whom she loved, the other, Bess Marguerite's pet enemy, who had attached herself to Barbara with a tenacious zeal and whom the latter bore with a courtesy which Bess Marguerite sneered at and envied.

This person was named May; she had only one characteristic—she was good—and, with her, this was a negative quality. Lacking the initiative to become a missionary—for which vocation she always secretly considered herself divinely intended—she compromised between her timidity and her conscience by devoting herself to the most martyr-like mood of “church work,” particularly attaching her-

self to the sinfully gay, exhibiting to them, in the unconscious egotism of an unimaginative mind, the spectacle of her own well self-recognized virtues.

Bess Marguerite once remarked that she "enraged you by her beastly contrast!"

This moral young person possessed a clinging way; her sympathy was so great that it ached for expression. Anyone could awaken it, none could get rid of it.

Having only one mood, this mood was forever with one. Her tearful eyes never left one's face; her pitying voice never lost its tone of melancholy condescension; her prim manner retained eternally its implication of admonition. The sloping chin dropped at the least shock of gayety, the lips trembled with disappointment, and the placid hand moved with a genteelly restrained gesture of expostulation.

Bess Marguerite would sit on the table in Barbara's room, her rough hair tumbled over her quizzical eyes, swinging her feet to ease her exasperation, while May,

reclining in the cushioned chair, her back to the flowers in the window, would talk to Barbara gently of the latter's duties to her old father, of the sinfulness of "light intercourse with the opposite sex," and of the beauty of a life of self-sacrifice.

Barbara bore it partly out of the delight of teasing Bess Marguerite by her superior endurance.

The combination came to an end on the afternoon of Hallowe'en.

Bess Marguerite had been sitting on her usual perch on the table in Barbara's room, while May languished through her monotonous sermon from her place in the easy chair; Barbara sat on the bed, nibbling chocolate from the box between her knees.

The subject of the present rhapsody was the church social to be given the next week in the Reverend Dr. Tonnage's church.

"Yes," May was saying, "it sometimes seems to me that we girls are not quite doing our duty—we are not fulfilling our mission here as we ought. Could we not

all of us do just a little more—even ever so little counts! Could we not all join together in a little plot—I do not think that would be wrong—to do good? The Reverend Doctor Tonnage is such a good man! He called at our house upon last Wednesday afternoon at half-past two o'clock and had tea. We were talking about pets and I asked him which he preferred, dogs or kittens, and he said, quite timidly, (he was balancing his tea-cup on his knee at the moment, as he always does)—he said, after careful consideration—you know how careful he is to always express his thoughts with due precision to give to them their true weight—and then he is so afraid of seeming to say too much and thereby giving the wrong impression——”

“Go on!” said Bess Marguerite.

“Yes, dear. Well, he said, that, after careful consideration—oh, dear, you have made me lose the thread of my story! Now, it seems to me that we three could do more this time for the social than we have done before. I am going

to ask each one of you girls to take a booth; I have the candy table; I would propose that Barbara take the fancy work and that Bess Marguerite take the ice-cream booth—nobody else will take it because the ice-cream is going to be contributed by outsiders and none of the others like to go about and request it—but now if Bess Marguerite took it—(she knows that wicked old Mr. Warriner who never does give anything for the missions)—she could go to him——”

“May!” cried Bess Marguerite, leaping to the floor with a bound and standing facing her, her little fists akimbo on her hips, “you will just leave me alone, and leave Mr. Warriner alone! I don’t care if he never gives anything to your nasty old missions—and he does give away his fruit, and his flowers, and his vegetables, to anybody who wants them—and that’s more than your nasty old parishioners do, anyhow! And now, look here! I’m tired of your horrid old socials, where all the men poke about like divinity students hunting to save your soul, and all the girls

look as meek as Moses! And I'm tired of your nasty 'duty,' and 'obedience,' and 'piety'—I don't care if I am bad—I never sneak my superiority over anyone! And Barbara's tired, too! Now, I'm not a hypocrite—and maybe one that don't know it—and I'm not a prude, and I've had just as much as I can stand of being preached at for my 'worldliness' by someone who don't know what it is!

"Now, you can get mad if you want to! Barbara, come away!"

May was weeping bitterly; she had quailed under the tirade like the sheep to the wolf.

Bess Marguerite's eyes were blazing, there was a suspicious trembling about her lips; the repressed rage of months had broken loose and she was struggling desperately to restrain the tears of anger.

"Bess Marguerite, you wicked ——" cried Barbara.

"Very well!" she exclaimed. "You take her side, too, if you want to! I don't care. If you want to go round with her of course—if you——"

The tears were very near now.

Barbara slid down from the bed and came over to her and put a hand on each shoulder.

Bess Marguerite pretended to shrug disdainfully; she would not let Barbara see the emotion of which she was so ashamed. She tried to meet her eyes bravely, and, after a struggle, succeeded. They gazed at one another for a moment. Then suddenly the whole ridiculousness of the scene rushed over them both at the same instant. The mouths—that of Bess Marguerite still sadly tremulous—began to curl up at the corners. They strove valiantly—it was no use. With a peal of laughter the reaction came, and they fell into each other's arms, speechless with mirth.

It acted on May like a dash of cold water. She rose to her feet, the tears wet on her flushed cheeks, her whole form quivering with righteous injury.

"When you insult me," she exclaimed dramatically, "I can bear it, because it is

my duty—but when you insult my church——”

She faced them a moment and stalked from the room.

When they recovered their equanimity to some extent they each found the subject too delicate for discussion, and Barbara, wise in instinctive consolation, after a moment's thought proposed, half tentatively, that they make a Hallowe'en party.

There was a certain embarrassment between them, and Bess Marguerite welcomed the suggestion as a relief from memory—welcomed it boisterously.

With the instant changeableness of their excited hearts, they raced down the stairs, leaped the piazza steps, and took the home-stretch down the grass border of the blue-stone drive, arriving breathless and exhausted at the open gate of the garden. It seemed to Barbara that, for the first time in her life, she realized the innate inconsistency of destiny—of the destiny of the course of every-day life.

“What shall we do?” said Bess Marguerite, gasping.

"Pumpkins — jack - lanterns!" replied Barbara. "Oh, that girl!"

They hauled the fat yellow things from their thickets of corn-stalks and dragged them over the brown grass by their withered stems. After a consultation Barbara ran back to the kitchen for knives and spoons, and the two established themselves, with rolled-up sleeves, on a banked curve of the garden path, slicing and scooping diligently at the unwieldy yellow bulks, while the tarnished, ruddy leaves of the trees shed their sadness about them and the chill breath of the autumn made them shiver a little as they bent, laughing and flushed, over their work.

Barbara wondered if the jollity of the plan would ease her friend's remembrance of the quarrel of an hour ago; it was in hopes of this that she had proposed it; the two led each other alternately in moods and suggestions, the one more buvant, the other more discreet, both uniting in the quality of a certain almost premature wisdom, in one shat-

tered by changefulness, in the other made a bit secretive by an undermood of the plaintive.

When the pumpkins were finished and their candles were fixed inside, the two girls carried them laboriously to the house and hid them on the piazza and then went back to the kitchen to wash the seedy yellow threads from their hands and arms. Barbara sent a note by the coachman to the Wyeth residence that Bess Marguerite was going to spend the night with her.

They signaled joyously to one another across the dinner table till they attracted the attention of Autran. After dinner they beckoned him mysteriously into a dark corner of the hall and both attacked him at once. He had to escort them.

He went out to view the pumpkins critically. Setting them in a row, the two girls triumphantly lit the candles, and the notched mouths, wedge-shaped noses, and goggle eyes, shone out with yellow fearfulness in the darkness.

"We had best wait for an hour or so,"

said Autran. "There is still a little light along the west."

"No!" cried Barbara. "Come now."

He laughed and went in for more cigarettes while the girls, struggling into their jackets as they ran, hastened to the barn for the coachman's son's express wagon.

When Autran emerged with his aristocratic and indolent air they were all ready to put him in service as their beast of burden; but as he insisted that Bess Marguerite should help him, the procession took its way in the gathering shadows, the two drawing and Barbara coming behind, every moment or so jumping to hold on a toppling pumpkin.

They left them at various houses, usually one on each gate post; once, their matches being all wasted in their incessant relightings—(they laughed so much that they blew out the candles in attempting to light them)—they had to force Uncle Autran to march up to a neighbour's, ring the bell and borrow some. They gave this neighbour two extra fine

lanterns with particularly vicious teeth. They favoured May of the pious soul with one with a melancholy look, and trundled the last two to old Mr. Warriner's.

Emboldened by his success, Uncle Autran audaciously bore the two great pumpkins to the very door while his comrades waited in suspense at the gate, placed them on the piazza on either side of the steps, tiptoed across to ring the bell—and the door opened.

"Eh!" grunted the gruff Mr. Warriner, standing on the threshold, stick in hand.

Autran backed down the steps.

"We thought you would be pleased at the attention," he said whimsically.

"Come back, sir!" cried the old gentleman.

Autran actually took to his heels, seized the handle of the express wagon from the delighted girls, and the three of them raced down the road in the darkness, till safe in the shadows of the trees they stopped exhausted, their Hallowe'en mischief finished.

As they stood, all three panting heavily, Bess Marguerite happened to glance up at Autran and caught the look with which he gazed at Barbara.

On the way home they were very gay, only Bess Marguerite was silent. Barbara laughed delightedly, her fresh young voice breaking the stillness every now and then with a snatch of song, while Autran murmured French airs, waving his lighted cigarette in the air in accompaniment, jerking along the ridiculous express wagon with the other hand, half forgetting his fifty years in the weird spell of this girl-comradeship in the night.

Again Bess Marguerite glanced at him sharply. It seemed to her, for a moment, that he had caught her look and understood it with some wonderful presence, and she looked away again quickly.

Now the stillness of the dark began to have its effect upon them. The huge, unnatural-looking shapes of the trees, rearing their black spires against the background of steady stars, awed their spirits into silence. The hush and half-

ecstasy, half-terror of the night stilled their gayety. They walked on, their weariness beginning to be realised, instinctively drawing a little closer together, the tall form of Autran in the middle.

At last they turned up the sloping road to the house. They left the express wagon on the piazza and unlocked the door softly.

Bess Marguerite stood for a moment looking after Barbara and Autran as they preceded her. As she stepped into the hall she dropped her handkerchief.

The girls said good-night to him and went upstairs, leaving him sitting there as ever, smoking his endless cigarettes in the great chair by the hearth. In the fireplace the last of the logs broke and fell apart, as Bess Marguerite passed up the stairs behind Barbara, throwing for an instant a ruddy gleam into her sombre eyes as she looked down over the banisters upon the lonely man sitting below. She had made a resolution.

In Barbara's room the latter undressed sleepily, while Bess Marguerite sat by the

fire (the maid had kept it up, for it was cold that year at Hallowe'en), talking of the adventures of the night and of the quarrel of the afternoon—the last seemed so far away now. Her mind was racing from remembered hint to hint; she spoke merely mechanically, feeling a sensation of losing herself in the unexplored land of a great discovery.

"Aren't you coming to bed, dear?" inquired Barbara.

Bess Marguerite pretended to yawn.

"Yes," she answered dreamily. "Oh, where is my handkerchief!"

"What?"

"Oh, I know. I left it in the hall."

"The maid will find it in the morning," murmured Barbara. "Get one out of my drawer—you know!"

"No," said Bess Marguerite, stretching. "I think I'll go down and get it. It's my best lace one. There's nobody there."

"Uncle Autran," laughed Barbara drowsily. "You will flirt with him."

"Yes," said Bess Marguerite, "I'll be up in a minute."

She opened the door and tiptoed down the stairs. She had resolved to speak with him.

"I have lost my handkerchief," she said to the silent figure in the chair.

He did not move.

"Yes," he said. "I saw you drop it."

She gasped.

"Here it is."

She came slowly down the stairs and across the hall and took it from his listless hand, awed by his wondrous quickness of detection. She stood a moment, at a loss to account for her feeling of defeat.

She moved towards the stairs and ascended slowly.

"Good-night," she said.

"Good-night," he answered.

She stopped when half way up and gazed down at him for a long minute. He did not turn his head. She was half frightened at a sudden new sensation of fright, of the realisation of the very ease of victory, of being thwarted for the first time in her life.

"Come in bed and cuddle me close," murmured Barbara, turning sleepily. "It's cold."

But Bess Marguerite sat down without answering in the big chair in front of the fire, sat leaning forward with her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands, gazing into the embers in silence.

CHAPTER III

THE ICE

The winter passed into spring; the summer came and faded; and with the autumn—a year from the Hallowe'en time when Bess Marguerite had discovered the secret that she had kept hidden in her heart—Barbara was in her first love affair; or, rather, in two affairs at once.

Perhaps in the pride of her seventeen years she was almost vain of not loving the two wooers who loved her, full of a girl's consciousness of her power, yet shy of admitting the realisation of it even to herself. A little disdainful, she teased adoration by indifference with the woman's instinct eternally easing torture by seeming yielding, then desolating again by the renewed delight of her luxurious tormenting.

Her dresses were long now, and she

wore her hair, if somewhat wild, at least "up." Her figure had filled out, without losing the suppleness of the girl, and she carried herself with a certain understanding of pose and movement enticingly coquettish.

Her suitors—they made love to her while she flirted with them—were similar only in the fact that she ridiculed both of them. Loving her at the same time, and alternately trying to displace one another, she thought of them always in conjunction as twin amusing impediments; perhaps if one had had the worldly wisdom to leave her alone with the other, his absence might have made him less unindividual, and therefore more interesting.

George R. Worthington was a town lawyer of twenty-four, with three old maid sisters, a small income, and an ancestral barrack, whose mournful decay was partially concealed and greatly enhanced by the eccentric villas which had invaded its mortgaged front lawn.

He was a short, stout youth, with weak

eyes, a country air, and a passion for poetry. Industrious, unconsciously honorable, half aware of his provinciality but sturdily unashamed of it, trustworthy, dull and faithful, he devoted his heart to his one romance with all the passion of a nature starved by commonplace and all the tenacity of a downright and unimaginative mind.

Proper with the respectability which he had always been incapable of analyzing, he allowed himself only three calls a week—and then only in the afternoon; this gave him a certain advantage. He never talked much; he would lounge on the piazza and consume tea and cake, while Barbara yawned in the hammock. When the cold weather came he would sit in the hall and stare at the fire in silence till the clock struck five, when he would take his departure with formality.

His rival was a tall, gaunt and intense person, always dressed in a Prince Albert and a black slouch hat, his hair rather too long, his eyes sombre with dreams

under an unintellectual forehead, the muscles of his face working restlessly about the weak jaw that ended in the pointed, sloping, artistic chin.

He was the well-to-do only orphan of a rich land-holding family of the town, and though he was thirty-two he still lived in the house of his former guardian, who was virtually his guardian still.

He had tried New York, but the competition was too unsympathetic for him. His tragedy in five acts was rejected and his volume of prose "moods" was equally "unavailable," so he returned from the city where he was nobody, to the country town where, by contrast, he was somebody. Against the background of the unintellectuality of the village he stood out as a "genius"—a word which his old-fashionedness still allowed him to use about himself—and this unconscious pose was the more admired by his towns-folk on account of the moroseness of failure which they believed to be the cynicism of a superior mind.

Algernon Marck—whom the small boys

yelled "Nonny" after—came to talk literature with Barbara every afternoon—she was not always at home. When he met Worthington he was ridiculously cross, a mood which Worthington's stupid optimism hid from him.

The only one of his half-talents which Marck had partially perfected himself in was piano music. All through the autumn he would sit in the evenings and play furious overtures to tiredly attentive Barbara; he never deigned to play simpler airs.

This continued until, just beyond the New Year, the end came.

Worthington arrived at four o'clock, his preciseness made restless by obvious worry.

Barbara gave him tea in the hall in front of the fire. By the end of ten minutes she was tremulously aware of what was coming.

"Come into the dining-room," he commanded, after a tense silence, his face very pale, "if you please."

"Why?" the girl asked in pretended innocence, rising nevertheless with the

ingenousness which seventeen years had not yet changed for the self-control of more experienced womanhood.

"I wish to speak to you," he replied in a formal voice, his body trembling violently.

He led the way into the dining-room. She followed.

"Sit down," he said. "It is more private here."

He walked to the window and stood twiddling his thumbs behind him, while she waited, after arranging her skirts, in the chair.

"My dear Miss Tappan," he said, "it must have been apparent to you that my—heart has been affected by sentiments towards you which I may not—always express. Aware as I am of my unworthiness——"

There was a break and a long pause.

"All I can offer you is a limited, comfortable income and a home in a respectable family, and the love of——"

Again the matter-of-fact tone broke for a moment.

"You know what the poet Owen Mere-

dith says in the last verse of his poem named 'Astarte': 'And my search for her may still be unavailing'—I—you know—my dear Miss Tappan——"

Once again there was silence. He stamped his foot.

"Well?" he cried, his voice rising for a moment into a new note, a hint of passion that almost startled her.

She rose to her feet. She took a long breath—(her first proposal!)

"Go, if you please," she said gently. "I will answer you to-morrow afternoon, at four o'clock—please."

She stood while he passed out, not looking at her. She could almost have respected him.

The hour that passed seemed almost a moment to her, yet, in some ways, a year—until the maid came and whispered to her, where she stood idly fingering the plants in the dining-room window, that Mr. Marck was in the hall and would like to see her.

She passed through the curtains debonairly, filled with relief.

"You have seen that man!" he cried as she drew back horrified at the fury in his face.

In the long moment that passed while his tall figure leaned forward in an half-consciously dramatic attitude (in spite of his sincerity he could never quite eliminate the dramatic). She grasped her sense of reality; it rose to a bitter rage.

"Leave me alone," she sneered. "I belong to myself. Realise it."

"Well?"

He broke down under her sombre eyes.

"Oh, Barbara!" he cried weakly. "You know I'm jealous. I love you too much for my own good—perhaps for yours——"

She laughed ironically.

"Don't!" he begged. "Don't. I—oh—I love you. I adore you with my whole heart and soul. I saw him come from your sacred door-way. I—I—oh!——"

"Tea, Miss Barbara?" inquired the maid, appearing behind her.

Barbara waved her back. She and Marck were standing, facing one another. She, her little chin in the air, her

eyes upon him in amazement under lowered brows, he now drawn up very stiffly, his hat in his hand.

The interruption had drowned his dramatic intensity like water on fire.

"To-morrow — dusk," he exclaimed, striding to the door and throwing it open.

Something of the pathetic in his folly appealed to her. She ran to the threshold after him. He was already crunching his way down the frozen ruts of the road.

"Mr. Marck!" her fresh voice cried through the cold clear air. "Mr. Marck!"

He did not hear; but as she cried, a figure stepped out from the hemlocks; that of Worthington. The two men stopped.

For a moment they stood motionless; then, as she screamed, Worthington's arm shot out and Marck staggered back and fell. In a moment he was up. The two black figures grappled in a whirl of snow; through the white mist she could see someone's, she could not tell whose, arm rise and descend again, and again, and again. The taller figure, Marck,

broke away. He turned and faced her for a moment. She could see a red streak down the side of his face. He backed slowly down the drive till he passed out of sight behind the hemlocks, the shorter figure slowly following.

Barbara walked unsteadily to the big chair and sat down. She felt weak with a sudden, sick sense of faintness. Yet, the first faintness gone, she woke through a feeling of unnaturalness to a sense of something that was almost pride, and the next moment was ashamed of it.

Two men had fought for her—two men had asked her to marry them! And yet the word had never been mentioned. She wondered if all proposals were like that.

The maid came in to light the lamps.

"Is he gone, Miss?" she inquired as she touched the taper to the wick she was turning up with the other hand.

"Yes," said Barbara. "Is it time for dinner?"

She got up wearily and went upstairs and bathed her face and hands in the

cool water by the light of the crackling fire, then, lighting the dressing candles, she began dreamily to arrange her hair.

Two men had asked her to marry them, and they had fought for her! What a fool Worthington had been with his formalness, and how ridiculous Marck was! She almost laughed. Her hands sank from her hair; the fire crackled merrily on the hearth.

"Dinner is ready, Miss Barbara," came the voice of the maid through the door.

Barbara laughed aloud.

"In a minute," she answered, awakening from her reverie and hurrying to finish her hair.

Bess Marguerite, who came in for an hour after dinner, noticed her flushed cheeks and watched Autran carefully, but decided it was not that. After her friend was gone Barbara, who knew she could not go to sleep early, sat with Autran listening lazily to his slow, drawling anecdotes of Paris, until, having eased her into fatigue, he sent her off to bed amusedly, waving a languid cigarette to

her in answer to the good-night she whispered from the stair landing. He had the power of making his impertinently bohemian air more courteous than another man's compliments, perhaps on account of his irony.

Barbara woke by sunrise and lay restlessly tossing on her bed, thinking things out in the chill dawn. At last she got up, and wrapping herself in her great dressing-gown, crossed to one of the frost-covered windows and stood looking out on the winter sunrise.

Over the snow-laden hemlocks the white roofs of the neighbouring villas rose in pallid squares, their intricacies of gable half-hidden in their load of smoothing drifts. Far away to the east the upland stood out against the daybreak, the sparse trees like a black fringe upon the pale canary yellow streak that broadened across the horizon.

Barbara opened the window, grasping the dressing-gown around her. The keen, frosty air brought with it the penetrating smell of kindling-lit fires—a resinous,

sweet odor of burning pine wood. Faint wifts of gray-blue smoke began to rise from the snow-swathed chimneys over the trees.

She closed the window with a shiver. There was a knock at the door; the maid came in to make the fire.

No, Barbara reflected as she sat in the arm-chair with her bare little feet to the quickening blaze while the maid laid on piece after piece with deft experience. No, she could not wait here all day doing nothing. She would go to the city and go shopping to pass the time, returning late in the afternoon. She only feared that Marck would call—she did not greatly expect it.

So she departed by the 8:30 train and arrived in New York an hour later. The river was full of floating ice and the ferry-boat had to crush her way, by repeated drives, into the dock.

Barbara took the blue Fourteenth Street car across to Union Square and changed up Broadway to Lord and Taylor's, where she bought some huck towels

for the laundry, and some covering for the ironing-boards, and some gloves, stockings and canary-coloured baby ribbon for herself.

After fried oysters at Dorlon's, she took the Twenty-third Street car westward, changing in front of the corner saloon to the West Street car, which drove past her ferry, the horse's bells jingling in changeful tunefulness as they trotted mechanically between the dirty mounds of shovel-heaped snow.

She had to sit a long time in the ladies' cabin of the ferry-boat before it ground its way through the ice-field that moved downward with the tide, leaving only an ever-narrowing passage in the middle of the river.

After half an hour she grew impatient and went out on the forward deck and stood leaning over the bulwark. At her side one of the Italian boot-blacks slouched, his boot box slung over his shoulder by its blackened strap, spitting mechanically into the water.

The whole river was filled with ice.

From shore to shore it lay, covered with snow; only in the narrow path, where the water seemed almost black, it heaved as if in freedom from the ice-layers on either side. Here and there even in this narrow space, great detached blocks came drifting down swiftly.

The ferry-boat had stopped, then in a moment it went on again, the great side-wheels churning the ice chunks into disappearing fragments as the huge bulk of the boat heaved and crushed down upon the wave-broken masses.

At last the vessel stopped, wedged in. The engine-room bells clanged once—twice—thrice. It was no use; the boat drifted, waiting till the press-ice would break.

Barbara leaned against the side-rail in the bow in front of the ladies' cabin. The boat was nearly in the middle of the river; the pallid cakes, as big as wagons, floated past rapidly, and the grinding bulks thudded hollowly against the wooden sides. Then at last the churning wheels drove the blunt vessel onward, her

huge prow crushing the ice-cakes that the tumult of the turning paddles drew towards them; slowly the boat thrashed her way through, rocking in the heave of the tideway, backing, then squashing with a jangle of bells into the wave-broke fields where the spray spurted up from the cracks at the impact.

As she stood leaning there on the bulwark, Barbara was thinking again of the affair of the night before, wondering with a mind fresh to the problem after a day's absorption in her buying but with a body fatigued by the tumult and stress of the shops, if she should give any answer, and if so, what.

Forging across their path, crumpling the ice-fields before her, moved the bulk of a great steamer, slowing ready to turn to her pier. The German flag was flying at her stern, and her bows, rearing themselves above the frozen tumult, were like icebergs in their glittering load of frost-riven spray. She was white to the tops, her funnels blinding in their mirror-like coating. Icicles as long as a man hung

stiffly from her moveless ropes and along her sides. In the afternoon sunlight she glittered like glass.

From her afterdeck her few passengers, visibly muffled, even at this distance, in their great coats, raised a faint cheer to the strange people on the imprisoned ferry-boat; the voices, in their unknown tongue, came delicately through the distance in the silent, keen, clear air, like a fairy's wail.

Barbara started and her brows drew down. These people were from the world—the world she did not know—so far away. They were come from the lands of the north, from Germany and Scandinavia—from the lands of the winter soul whose foreign and teeming life took its quaint way above the desolate memories of bitter and prehistoric ages.

So her thoughts ran dreaming as the ice-shrouded ship forced her way past in front of them, seeming hardly to move yet leaving a heaving track of white-specked black water behind her.

These people had come from so far

away. She remembered all the old books she had read in her father's library about these strange lands of the north—lands that were to her dreamlands, seemingly in her heart, impossible and inevitable to visit.

A vast longing arose in her soul, the longing of the dreamer for her dream, of the child for the truth of its fantasies, of the lonely for the meeting at last of her half-comprehended desires.

A burst of music came, wafted faintly over the distance—a French steamer was bearing down the river, her band playing the "Marseillaise." From her foremast flew the tricolour. She was outward bound, going to the gay lands of France, where girls laugh in the yellow sunlight and the soft cottony cloud-ships sail along the horizon of the country whose air is sensuous with the scent of roses.

Even now—at this time in the afternoon—the crowds were taking their five o'clock "Pernods" in the warm, lit cafés of the Boulevard Capucine, the snow piled outside between the roaring streams

of flashing carriages, as Autran had told her.

The music came faintly over the frozen water.

The ship was passing now. Barbara wondered desolately, half whimsically, if it were perhaps bearing her thoughts away forever to that land she dreamed of from her alien distance here. Perhaps the love of her ideals would, by some means, dream of her—and be ever true—waiting——

“Shine, Miss?” cried the boy at her elbow.

From beyond, on the farther shore a factory whistle wailed its sordid, dead, dull, lonely, distant note.

The great wheels churned. She awoke as from a stupor.

With a sudden breathlessness she half realised that she had made a vast leap onward in life; that she had lived, in one moment, the last year that had been waiting in her heart to be lived.

And with the realisation she shivered slightly, feeling, in a quick, strange, deso-

lateness, that the old mood was gone forever—gone with her girlhood. She was a woman now—and instantly with the reflection there came a novel feeling of sadness, an infinitely ancient heartbreak—it was gone, and the world seemed very sordid again, quite ordinary; only she retained the unanalyzed sensation that something had happened to her, she knew not what.

The outgoing ship was now almost out of sight. Again the factory blew its long-drawn, faint, weary, monotonous note. The paddle wheels churned again.

By the time they reached the pier the winter sun was setting over the huge white roofs of the grain elevators, and when Barbara, after a weary journey on the train and a jolting ride up to the house in the straw-filled station hack, entered her own warm hall, where the waiting-maid forced her into the great chair by the fire and ran to get dry stockings and soft, warm slippers for her chilled little feet—then the girl breathed a long sigh of ease—an ease as much

mental as it was physical. She had at last come to a decision.

"Has anybody called?" she inquired wearily as the maid warmed the fresh stocking in front of the blaze.

"No, Miss Barbara."

"Give me pen, ink and paper."

The girl brought them while her mistress held out her little bare feet towards the fire and hastily scribbled two notes—then tore them up, and after ten minutes of thought wrote two others.

Each contained but a single word—"no."

"Tell the coachman to take these at once," she commanded. "I am not at home."

The maid hurried out with the papers.

Barbara lay back in her chair. She was utterly exhausted.

From the library came the sound of her father's soft, placid voice, reading Theocritus in the original Greek to Autran. She caught the faint perfume of a cigarette.

CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION

Again the winter passed; the spring came; the old life went on as before—Bess Marguerite, the oblivious father, Autran, household duties, music, studies, little country entertainments, occasional visits to the city. Barbara had no regrets at having rejected her two suitors; it seemed to her that her mental life had taken a stride forward; she looked back on her former mind-mood with a sense of gazing down. She began to live almost a dream-life—a revery of foreign lands first awakened in her that winter afternoon when the ferry-boat was caught in the ice, and since fostered more than ever by her companionship with Autran—a life that was in her heart an unconscious refuge from the monotonousness of her everyday existence.

Under Autran's guidance she began to

read the translations of foreign books, while he would literally translate the more difficult passages. Sneering at Puritanism, he was yet the idealist, having cast aside moral right and wrong for chivalry's high and low, and shrugged off piety for tolerance. She read the "Woman of Thirty," the "Père Goriot," the "Eugenie Grandet," the "Marriage Contract," and the "Two Brothers" of Balzac, "Mademoiselle de Maupin," "Madame Bovary" Zola, Loti. She grew to love Heine; and one day Autran made her fall in love with Swinburn.

Her father's exclusiveness of appreciation of them had made her associate the ancient classics with age and her seizing vitality made her grasp the new.

During the rest of this winter she developed marvelously in mind and heart, and when she met John Craige she was an intellectual woman, though a girl in years and body.

He was a manager of a leather firm in New York, and one whom his business associates knew as a "rising power."

His parents had died when he was fifteen, and he had worked his way through Harvard, afterward rising from a small position to a place which, at twenty-nine, gained him a good salary.

His pride was that he "was a self-made man." He had no other vanities, boasting of the modesty of his modesty, and in that modesty boastfully showing the places on his soft hands where the workman's pick had calloused them.

He was a short, strong man, matter of fact and practical; his brown, stiff moustache pointing up tensely from either side of his square, smooth-shaven chin.

Barbara met him in the city at the house of a girl with whom she was staying over night; and after several meetings—meetings entirely unprearranged by her—she invited him, out of politeness, to call upon her if he ever came out to Hilltop.

To her surprise he called upon the next Sunday. He explained, his keen eyes turned provokingly from her, that he had gone to Hilltop to see some friends,

instantly revealing his duplicity, and after a call of ten minutes and a gulp of tea, left her gruffly.

She laughed about him that night with Bess Marguerite; but during the following days she did not cast him out of her mind as she had cast out her two former suitors.

Whenever he came to her—it was often now—she grew the more easy with his gruff ways—for he was kind in spite of his gruffness.

Insensibly she associated him with the city. His first advance in her interest was when his presence began to break the monotony of her existence. She grew to look forward to the Sunday visits, when, after amusing her father and boring Autran at dinner, he' lounged on the piazza with her, confiding to her his business ambitions and interrupting his jokes with interjections on life. The jokes were old and the remarks trite; but he was not rural.

Totally without whimsicality and entirely lacking in idealization, his mind

possessed that immediate practicalness we call acuteness rather than that ultimate practicalness we name philosophy; he was American, not Teutonic; his nature was Puritanic, eager without joviality, energetic, careful, and narrow, with the sense of detail developed at the expense of that of generality. Utterly unoriginal, close-fisted, yet fond of ostentatious self-assertion, kind-hearted rather than generous, a man of the world who had yet never had enough mental breadth to become tolerant, forever bounded by an Anglican strictness of right and wrong, absolutely without imagination, yet just, keen and observant—all these qualities made up a sum which Autran called "a first-class commonplace."

To the cosmopolitan he seemed the perfect type of the American business man, well educated but unscholarly, quick yet unsensitive, dogmatic yet shallow, keen yet ignorant, competent yet ordinary; to the business man the cosmopolitan seemed a pedantic old jester of a rake, romantic yet ironic, keen, cold, and

witty, a cynic idealist of folly, a gay and indolent world-observer with much erudition and no morals.

While Autran undervalued Craige's applicableness, Craige undervalued Autran's wisdom; the commonplace made himself seem more than he was, while the great man let himself seem less than he could be. If Autran had ever considered the possibility of offering himself for Barbara's hand the fact that the commonplace was so obviously a suitor would have deterred him—he would have disdained to fight such a rival. As for the commonplace, he never for a moment considered such a possibility.

Bess Marguerite used to look at Autran with wonder; she grew more and more in awe of him. They had become close companions, thrown much on each other's society now that Barbara began to allow herself to be monopolized by the new wooer.

Barbara was in a strange mood; feeling herself a woman now, in the languor of the spring, she took on a new slowness

of movement and glance, an indolent, teasing, subtle air, half cruel and almost sensuous; unconsciously she used her very innocence as a more delicate seduction, sitting with lowered eyes that lifted suddenly, for a moment, at a word, with the semblance of a childish wonder, then lowered again, while her face blushed slowly, and the deep corners of the mouth turned upward for an instant with a laughter too sleepy to quite awake, half sneer and half the passionate hint of joyousness.

She did not understand herself; she hardly thought, lost in a dreamy, uncomprehended, vague and inarticulate desire. She seemed to herself to be waiting for she knew not what. A haze of revery seemed to her to hang about her heart—a wavering, enchanted, delicious and terrible mist, like the mist that shrouded the springtime sun in early dawns when it hung veiled and mysterious just above the horizon, before its luminousness broke through, spearing the retreating shadows in a glory of golden spears.

Sometimes, when alone, she laughed for no reason, and she spent hours drowsily gazing at herself in the glass.

Occasionally the mood was shattered for a moment by a burst of temper, usually an exasperation over some petty, persistent annoyance that disturbed her reverie like an engine-whistle in dream-land. Then she would sink back again into the stillness of her vast content—a content that covered a volcano.

She was aware of no more than that she was gradually—suddenly—full of new feelings, hardly thoughts, yet more than a girl's fantasies. She wondered at her ignorance of a year ago as at some other person's unaccountable folly, a folly of which she could now hardly believe herself to have been capable.

Autran watched the coming of the woman-nature with a sigh—he held himself in the position of a spectator of this awakening of the love-mood, the wish for surrender, the unrealized desire for the exhaustion of satisfaction that comes after love has shylessly knelt to her con-

queror. Autran watched, half amusedly, yawning a little at the age-old tragical comedy with a novel pain in his heart. He had watched it so many times in so many women—and it was always the same—the same—they were utterly alike. The reflection made him feel suddenly old and he turned to Bess Marguerite for relief.

She understood nothing of it. The change in Barbara had made her feel almost deserted by her friend; she wondered at her and could not explain its reason to herself. Her less exclusively feminine nature, so quick to comprehend man, failed before the moods of the woman who was only woman. The girl tom-boy in her, which had so instantly detected and sympathised with Autran's secret, was powerless to comprehend Barbára.

June came, and one afternoon Barbara, who knew that her father would be coming back along his favourite woodland path from one of his occasional afternoon rambles, met him where the dusty road

curved between two overshadowing clumps of poplars.

The old gentleman was meandering homeward aimlessly, picking his way along the grassy border, careful of the dust, his long black coat hanging about him, his white hair straggling from under his tilted-back, carelessly-brushed top-hat, a great, gold, tarnished, leather-bound volume under each arm. He had been reading the Greek poets in the lanes, an environment, he said, eminently conducive to the quiet of mind which is fitted to appreciate them. Burrs stuck on his trousers, his square-toed shoes were white with dust, and on his face was a look of ecstatic peace.

He raised his benevolent old countenance towards her as they met. "Why, Barbara," he said, "what are you doing so far away from home?"

"I came to meet you," she replied.

"Really?" the old man exclaimed. "You are a good girl, very good—quite so. I have been for a walk. Shall we go on homeward?"

"Certainly, father," she replied.

They walked on in silence. He was wrapt in the dream of the afternoon. She glanced at the burrs on his trousers, then away again.

"Mr. Craige likes you," she remarked casually, after they had gone some distance.

"Yes?" the old gentleman murmured. "Ah, indeed."

"Do you think he cares for me?"

"Of course," he answered. "He—eh? How do you mean?"

He stopped and looked up at her quickly.

"He—asked me to marry him."

The poets dropped to the ground with one thud.

"Oh, the books!" cried the old gentleman, hastily stooping and gathering them up again under his arms.

The girl helped him.

"He asked you to marry him?"

"Yes," she said, turning away from him to pull a branch of ivy from the tree at her side.

"Be careful of the ivy," he exclaimed. "It is the poisonous kind. Let me see—what is the name—o fons ban—no, no—I am full of poetry to-day. He asked you to marry him? But—but Barbara, you—you don't want to marry yet. Why—why did he ask you?"

She courtesied to him there in the dusty road.

"Look at me, sir!" she said, laughing. "Did you never look at me before? Oh, you are not complimentary!"

"Why—why—why, yes," replied the old gentleman, putting up his eye-glasses and gazing at her critically. "To be sure—quite so. Very adorable indeed, my dear. Allow me." He raised her fingers to his lips with his old world grace.

She stood looking at the ancient figure as he bent over her hand, her eye-brows lifted, her face hot with blushes under the shadow of the great hat that rested upon her curly hair, her red mouth parted in a half-sensuous enjoyment.

"Yes, I suppose she will marry," he murmured.

"I have not given him my reply yet."

"No, no," he answered, patting her hand. "What did you say?"

"I wanted to consult with you about it."

"Yes—quite so," he said. "Well?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you—love him?"

Again she raised her eye-brows and gazed at him, half humorously.

"Really," he said, "you are very pretty. Do you love him?"

"I—think so," she answered.

She broke away with a laugh.

"Oh, don't look at me," she cried.

They walked home nearly in silence, only, when they reached the entrance to the driveway he arrested her too fast steps with a hand on her arm and asked her two or three serious questions about her wooer's prospects. She answered sensibly.

"Yes," he said, as they stood on the threshold. "Yes—a very nice young man, very nice indeed. Send Autran in to me."

He hastened off to the library.

She sent the maid to find Autran with the message and went up to her room.

When she came down to dinner an hour later her father was alone in the hall. He stepped across to her and kissed her on the hair—a thing he very seldom did.

"Autran agrees with me," he said. "He has investigated. It is all right. I hope——"

The front door flew open with a bang.

"Oh, Barbara," laughed Bess Maguerite. "I have come to dinner. We——"

She caught sight of Autran's face as he appeared at that moment between the portieres that hid the library door. She looked from one to the other while he stood gazing at her quizzically.

"Barbara!" she cried in a new voice, a voice almost of horror, of blame.

Autran stepped across to the blushing girl, smiling his old whimsical smile.

"Allow your Uncle Autran to wish you all good things," he murmured, stooping gallantly over her hand. "Will you accept my arm to dinner?"

The repressed excitement of the day gave way with a burst, and Barbara threw herself on Bess Marguerite's shoulder in a storm of tears—not understanding why—while Bess Marguerite motioned the men away into the dining-room.

"How did you know?" whispered Barbara when she was a little quieter.

"I saw it in your eyes," Bess Marguerite replied.

She led her in to dinner. Barbara took the head of the table and Bess Marguerite her usual place by Autran.

The excitement was eased by her burst of tears. Barbara went to the other extreme and was wildly gay, laughing and jesting with Autran and her friend till the whole table was in a roar of mirth, to her father's vast delight.

Bess Marguerite's little hand stole out under the table-cloth and grasped Autran's in one momentary, honest grasp of sympathy—there was no love in it, only an overmastering pity, a comprehension and admiration and sympathy such as a man might give a friend, and to her

never-forgotten amazement, even while he laughed, there was, for an instant, a quick, answering grasp. It was the only admission he ever made of his love.

That night, after Craige's short visit on the piazza was over, Bess Marguerite stayed with Barbara, but under pretext that she was not sleepy asked to have the spare room; she wanted to think. It was next to Autran's, and as she sat half-dressed in the easy chair, musing over the affair, his slow footsteps began back and forth.

His tread startled her at first, then it became monotonous in her brooding mind, then, after a time, it grew to be like a succession of slow, regular blows, it pounded upon her heart like steady sledges. She wondered why it tortured her so.

She crept to the door and listened—there was not a sound, not a sigh—only that monotonous tread.

She threw off the rest of her clothes and flung herself into bed, pressing the pillow over her head till she could hardly

breathe; her eyes felt hot with unshed tears—she so seldom cried.

After a long time the tumult in her heart seemed to grow less, the convulsive breath grew calmer; she went to sleep, exhausted with her thoughts, with that ceaseless, regular, monotonous tread sounding dimly in her ears, the last sound her retreating attention distinctly heard.

It seemed to her that she was tiptoeing down the stairs, her dressing wrapper huddled over her night-gown, her bare feet in their fleece-lined slippers.

Autran was sitting in his usual place in the hall, immaculate in his evening dress, his dainty patent-leather boots stretched out in front of him on the hearth. She had so often seen him so.

In spite of the silence of her tread he heard it, and looked up with a smile, waving his cigarette to her indolently in salute.

She came down the stairs and over the thick India rugs and knelt at his side. He put his arm around her shoulders for a moment and then drew it away.

"Autran," she said, "you do love her, don't you?"

"Yes," he answered, his whimsical smile passing across his face, while his eyes, behind their irony, held unknown tragedies. "Who?"

"Her."

"No, my child."

He looked at her amused, aware that she knew he was not speaking the truth, knowing she knew he was aware of it.

Her head sank on his arm that lay along the side of the chair—the arm that lay so languid under her brow and that she had seen stiffen to the tenseness of steel as he taught her fencing.

"Ah, Autran," she cried in a low voice. "You love her with your heart and soul—she is to you youth, and purity, and innocence, and laughter, and a girl's wisdom. You are so tired—and she is rest. She is the virginity of springtime that you who grew old too young have always dreamed of—the passionate, wondrous girlhood of it and its enchantment and elusiveness. She is rest at last for you

weary and lonely ideal, more humanly yours for her very imperfections. She is all you have been waiting for all your life. And now, because you are of the world and she is not, because you are older than she—in mind more than in years—because she has never thought to think of you with love, now you remain silent in the courage of a sublime folly—and I—can only be your friend.”

“No,” he said. “I do not love her.”

“Do you love anyone?” she cried.

It seemed to her that it was another girl speaking—surely she never spoke like that! For a moment she half realised she was dreaming.

“Bessy, and Helga, and Justine, and Peggy, and Margy,” he answered cynically, “I suppose I loved them.”

She knelt by his side, sobbing gently in despair. Then she raised her head.

“You do love her—you do,” she cried, and, startled at her own voice, awoke with a shudder.

The pale dawn came through the windows. It seemed to her that she missed

something in the silence, something that she had gone to sleep listening to—then in a moment it began again—Autran's footsteps; they had evidently halted near her door.

She shuddered again and a sob shook her.

When they met in the hall that morning the others had just passed on into the breakfast room; they looked at each other strangely. They were both pale. He rested his hand for a moment on her shoulder.

"You were dreaming last night, child," he said.

She shrank from him in horror.

"Do not credit me with more than my due," he answered. "I heard only a few words."

He bowed her in to breakfast, smiling after her beneath his white mustache.

CHAPTER V

THE IDEAL

Craige's proposal was characteristic.

They had been sitting on the piazza two days before (Barbara wanted a day to think before announcing it). It was after dinner, and above the black rim of trees along the far-away opposite hill-top the huge yellow moon rose full and round, like a shadowy disk of coppery Russian gold. The bats flitted in the obscurity like flying leaves, wavering across the white moon-path for an instant and flitting erratically again in a second into the darkness.

Barbara wore yellow and white, a dress of many fluffs and tucks, a red rose in her brown hair, a huge yellow and white lace hat on the back of her head. The dress had big sleeves that stopped at the elbows and were pushed a little further up the

arms; it was cut out a little at the neck—just enough to show the slender, proud young neck like a white pillar rising from a soft foam of lace, and when she leaned forward the top of the curve of her breast.

Barbara was speaking slowly—it was she who did most of the talking, Craige was always a rather silent man.

“So,” she continued in her dreaming young voice, “it is a night like this that makes me think of those wonderful and beautiful places that Autran has told me of and that I have read of from books. Don’t think me foolish or impractical, but I have always been lonely and I have lived perhaps too much in lonely imaginings.”

The lawn was as light as day, but the air was dark; underneath the roof of the piazza it was perfectly black except where the moonlight lay in silver flakes on a fold of the girl’s dress, a curve of lace, or the great white rim of her hat, like an aureole round her shadowy hair. The world was absolutely still. Craige, sitting

on a camp-chair at a little distance away against the rail of the piazza, gazed at her in the darkness in silence.

"He has told me about the Thames on summer night fêtes, where the black blocks of house-boats lie like houses along the hidden banks, their windows lit like the port holes of war ships, the swinging strings of yellow Japanese lanterns festooned above the gayly-dressed crowds on their roof-decks—while between, up and down the water that glistens in the moonlight, pass the boats full of laughing people, while the music of mandolins comes from the house-boats and friends call through the murmur of laughter, over the water, to one another.

"Ah, don't think I'm foolish because I dream of the poetry of life! All these things have been, in a way, my realities—I live in the future you know!

"He has told me about the summer nights on the Rhine. The shallow boats drift down with the current, the girls in the stern, the men in the middle, the musicians touching their zithers softly in

the bow. From far away, along the shore, came the faint ghosts of orchestras from behind the lights in the gardens, and against the moon, high above, rise the black ruins of some robber-baron's castle. The boat drifts, the foaming beer flows from the keg into the stone mugs, the zithers ring out plaintively, the jolly boat-load breaks into the German song, 'Tannenbaum'—do you know it?"

She raised herself higher on her elbow in the hammock.

"And then Paris—the Seine! You know old Saint Cloud, curving up its hillside to the forest, an hour's boat ride down the river? In the long spring twilights, while the gay crowds hang over the parapet of the bridge along which rumble the many wheels of the fiacres bearing the tired merry-makers in towards the barriers—then under the bridge, lit only by the glowing ends of the cigars smoked by the white-trousered men, the still-gliding boats go by, the dark-haired girls in the stern shading themselves from the eyes of the crowds under the

bridge lamps, tipping their lacy parasols, glistening with dew, smothering the ironicalness of their laughter behind white-gloved hands."

She stopped.

"How do you know all this?" he asked curiously.

"I don't know," she said in a voice from which the intensity had suddenly gone. "It is imagination, I suppose."

She stopped again.

"It has always seemed to me as if my destiny took the form of rivers," she said, dreamily. "They mean movement, travel, change, wonder, going away——"

Leaning forward he saw that her eyes were very wide open in the moonlight.

"I have lived in dreams," she continued. "I am only a girl. Bess Marguerite is more selfish than I could ever be—love to her means intensity—to me it is loyalty, tenderness. Autran is too old to understand, he is not foolish enough to understand a girl——"

A cloud veiled the moon for a moment and passed.

"It must seem very exaggerated to you," she added with a quick change of mood. "My descriptions are quite like national Christmas cards! I don't know why they remind me of them—but they do. A woman's mind is always full of mysterious significances."

"What would you like to do if you were married?" he asked.

"Do you want to know?"

"Yes, tell me."

She leaned forward in the hammock, her lithe body curved sideways, her bare elbows on a cushion, her raised chin on her hands.

"First," she said, "I would want to make my husband very ambitious—for me. Oh, I would want to make him just work all the time and come out with a splendid victory so everyone would admire him—and—and envy me! Isn't that foolish? And I would want him to come to me, first, for his incentive; then, while he was working, for—rest—and, after he had won his triumph, for my congratulation."

"Don't you think you would monopolize him a little?" said Craige, amusedly.

"No," she replied. "I would not ever dare to try to! If I tried to force him, I know well enough he would go. I know something about men, even though I have lived in the country all my life. I think I would always flirt with him. I hate a woman who can't flirt—she's either afraid of herself or else she's stupid. I would want to be to him as if—as if we weren't married—and sort of pretend, you know, so that he would always want me—and I—I would want him! Do you see?"

"In other words," said Craige, "you would play a sort of a game with him."

"Well," she said, serious in spite of his bantering tone, "I suppose you would call it that. But why not? Life's not so perfect that we don't get more out of imagination than out of reality. If we didn't dream dreams and try to fulfil them there wouldn't be any great events in the world, because there wouldn't be any great men—and I don't believe there would be many good ones either. Of

course I would make it a play—and try to make the play real, too. If we couldn't imagine something better than chance gives us we wouldn't be much."

"A moment ago I thought you were a cynic, now I see you are an idealist," said Craige, "but always a philosopher."

"You've got to be one to be the other," she answered.

She laughed.

"Well," said Craige, "now tell me what else you would want to do."

"If I were married? Then, after he was all triumphant, and all ready, we would go abroad. We would take a little apartment in Paris where it was all awfully sunny all the time, and we would live there—but we would travel about to all those places—and he would be doing lots of things and becoming more and more famous."

"And you?"

"I would try to never grow any older, and steal him back from all the women who would love him because he was a great man, and I would try to be more

than just a flirt with him, too. I would try to be comrades with him, and go through the world with him hand in hand instead of hanging on to his coat-tails like most women do. There isn't any girl that's worth the care most men assume when they marry them—truly there isn't! There are lots of girls—and a man sees so many of them—and one can console him for the loss of another, if only in a different way—oh, better than you think!"

Craige laughed.

"And what else would you want?"

"Lots of acquaintances—if he liked society," she replied, "and pretty dresses and all that—when we could buy them together—I would want him to know that I dressed for him, not for show—and books, and Autran, and my father, and Bess Marguerite—and——"

She glanced at him shyly.

"That is all."

He leaned towards her; the moonlight was on his back and on her face.

"Would you care for me?" he asked.

There was a long silence.

"Would you ——" she began, and stopped.

"No," he laughed, "would you?"

"Of course—all of my friends would be very welcome!"

"Answer!" he commanded, "would you?"

He got up and went over to her in the darkness.

She would not speak.

"Would you?" he whispered.

"As a friend?" she asked, very low.

"No."

Again there was a silence.

"How, then?"

Craige drew himself up.

"Barbara," he said, with the air of a man making an announcement, "be my wife!"

The girl threw herself back in the hammock in a gale of laughter.

"If you——" he began angrily.

"Wait a minute," she cried breathlessly.

"I'm not through yet!"

"Barbara——" he began.

"I—I can't be dignified in a hammock!"

she exclaimed, lying and looking at him. "In answer to your question I would reply, with all due solemnity—that—you may kiss my hand—Mr. Craige—No, no! Wait a minute. I must have time to think—(I am going to call you Craige). I will tell you to-morrow, Craige——"

"What?"

"You won't always be—respectable—will you? You know what I mean."

She raised herself again and looked at him.

"I hope so," he replied fervently.

"No, no, I mean—good—trying to do everything that everybody else does—being just——"

"I don't understand," he said.

"Just—just average. I'm not bad—but I do love life, and I want, so terribly, to get away, out into the world—to—to—live! I have always been shut up here where I was always lonely except when these dull neighbours bored me—and now I want to break through this wall that has separated me from life. I want cities. Marriage means to me an opening—a

beginning—a—a waking up. I tell you this honestly. I don't want you to take me under a misapprehension."

"Never mind the misapprehension, dear," he said eagerly, "just tell me that I may take you!"

"I will tell you to-morrow," she answered. "Now I'm going in, and you must go! Come at eleven in the morning."

That night Barbara thought long.

A felt, but not understood, desire for a difference of scenes to assist her mood of judgment led her to shut out the white moonlight and light all the candles in the room—on the dressing-table and in the sconces.

She undressed quietly and put on her yellow dressing-gown and seated herself in the big chair before the bookcase, her head on her hands on the chair arm in her characteristic attitude.

Along in front of her, a little above, shone coppery-coloured in the candle light, the gilded backs of her favourite books—Balzac, and Stendahl, and Tur-

genief, and Swinburn, and Heine, with Landor and Theocritus, "Vanity Fair," "Faust," Meredith, Don Quixote, and Tennyson, and Montaine, Bacon, and Schopenhauer—and a little below her childish favourites, "The Children of the Abbey," Louisa M. Alcott, Tennyson's Poems, Rider Haggard, the bound volumes of the "Youth's Companion," and the rest.

Her big bed, with its air of indolence, stood at the end of the room, her dainty dressing-table on the side with soft chairs scattered about, a table laden with carelessly thrown dresses, in the middle. Curtains were drooping in the dim light at the windows, the red walls were bare save for a caricature of May by Bess Marguerite, (who was clever as a caricaturist with her pencil), in a corner.

So Barbara sat down to consider her destiny.

"Let me try to be reasonable—as Craige would say"—she said to herself. "I must decide!"

So she sat for a few minutes, then she

rose determinedly, opened her door and went to the stair head.

"Uncle Autran!" she called.

"Yes?" he answered from where he sat in his usual place in the hall below.

"Will you please come up here to my room?"

"Well," he said, as he stopped on the landing, "what is it?"

"Come in here and I will tell you," she replied.

She seated herself in the big chair.

"Sit on the bed if you can't find a chair," she said.

After inspecting the room, every chair laden with clothes, he gingerly seated himself on the bed.

"You may use the carpet as an ash-tray."

He carefully touched the ashes from his cigarette onto the exact centre of an Axminster rose.

"Uncle Autran," she began, cuddling up in the big chair.

"Well, child?"

"I'm not a child. Now listen!"

She drew up one knee against the arm of the chair and turned towards him.

"If you were me," she began, "would you—you—accept an offer of marriage from a man whom you only——"

"Yes?" he prompted.

"Oh, you know! A man whom you only believed you cared for, only with your heart and not with your mind? Now, you see, what I want to know is this——"

Again there was a pause.

"Oh—you!" she cried. "Why can't you understand? I——"

"You want to know," said Autran, "if I were you, would I accept an offer of marriage from a man whom I loved with my heart, but not with my mind. I have lived a good deal in life. No, I would not. The heart can love many times, the mind loves seldom."

"Do you mean," she asked, "that we think—love?"

"No," he said, "we usually don't."

"And, when we do?"

"It usually——"

"Goes?"

"A—yes."

"And, when we don't think it?"

"More quickly."

"Then it is all a tragic farce and only pleasure worth while?"

"Do you speak of love, or——"

"Wait a minute. I am asking about the usual love between man and woman. I want to ask you whether you think we could be happy—when—one loves the other and the other cares only with her heart."

"My child," said Autran, "love is, perhaps, the most compound thing of existence—from lust to ideals, it runs every note—sometimes a harmony and sometimes a discord, usually both, and in its application it usually ends in a monotony. Truthfully, if you can't be a man's best friend don't marry him lest you become his enemy. I know well enough that married people are seldom friends. What everybody says is probably nonsense because most people are fools. The various sorts of love demand various arrangements—but civilization is an arti-

ficiality—and the artificial is civilization. Well?”

“But, Uncle Autran!” she cried, leaning towards him. “Don’t you see? Ah, but when a girl’s life opens out before her—you don’t know what dreams I’ve had! Why, I’ve dreamed of every place in the world—of the ice-seas of the north that you have told me about—of the straight streets of the German cities—of the boulevards of Paris——”

She stopped.

“Won’t you help me?”

“Yes. In all ways. By listening?”

“You’re unsmypathetic,” she cried, “and cruel!”

He got off the bed and came over to her and bowed over the big chair.

“Am I, child?” he whispered.

She leaned her face on his hand and began to cry gently.

He withdrew his hand and went softly to the door and passed down the stairs.

In a moment her voice called over the banisters.

“Uncle Autran!”

"Yes?"

"You're smoking your endless cigarettes down there! Will you forgive me?"

"Yes. For what?"

"For——"

She stopped.

"Uncle Autran!"

"Yes?"

"I have—said——"

There was a pause.

"I know," he answered.

"You're not angry?" she cried, her new happiness for the first time breaking through her voice.

She waited a moment.

"I have said that I wouldn't tell him till to-morrow."

Again she waited.

"Yes?"

"Bother your cigarettes!"

She slammed her door.

In her own room she flung herself on her knees in front of the dressing-table that she had lit so gayly an hour before.

"Craigel!" she cried silently, "Craigel! I don't care! I am lonely!"

CHAPTER VI

GOOD-NIGHT

There was no incident of courtship, except that the secretiveness of Barbara's nature—that living in her own thoughts which her lonely childhood had taught her—grew till she kept her love almost apart, as her own possession. She showed it little, even to her betrothed; she was more in love with love than with any man.

The old languor was heavy on her spirit. She listened with seeming attention to Craige's discussion of plans and arrangements, but it was the intentness of revery that seemed to listen because forgetting to move. One evening as he sat by her on the piazza talking while she lay in the hammock in the moonlight, she suddenly leaned over his chair and kissed him passionately on his strong neck.

She lay looking at him with mysterious eyes, nearly shut, sleepily amused at his surprise; she had never kissed him before, though he had kissed her.

"It looked so white in the moonlight," she murmured, moving subtly in the hammock with the grace of a cat.

For the first time in his life Craige was embarrassed. He did not understand why; he began to talk of his friend Satterlee who was to be his best man.

This friend accompanied him to call one afternoon—a tall, slim man of forty, usually silent, but with the gift of language. Barbara made them both stay to dinner, and watched the two figures, the tall one and the shorter broader one, depart down the driveway in the moonlight at eleven o'clock.

On the first of July she began with the dressmakers. The wedding had been set for the first of September.

Bess Marguerite was to be the maid of honour. There were no bridesmaids. She supervised everything.

They made out lists of what would be

necessary—underwear, one dozen sets, three with lace, for best, three with insertion, and the rest with embroidery; stockings, one dozen pairs, six of silk, three pairs of which were coloured; shoes, five pairs, two for street wear, one for house, a pair of evening slippers and a pair for the bedroom; gloves, one dozen pairs, six for evening wear. As to dresses, there was great discussion. At last they decided upon the following list: wedding dress of cream-white Japanese silk with guimp of lace over cream; going-away dress of brown, with lace; one street dress of brown and yellow; one calling costume, also of brown, but trimmed with fur, with a jacket; one house dress of pink; two evening dresses, one pink with cream lace guimp, for a dinner gown, and one of yellow and cream, cut in a curve, rather high in the front but falling off the shoulders; in addition to these there were three wash dresses of muslin, three duck skirts, five shirt waists, and two silk waists, with a dark skirt to go with them. They arranged for five hats, the big

brown felt going-away hat, with feathers; a broad summer hat of yellow straw; two calling hats, one trimmed with fur; and a street hat, the three latter big also. In addition there was a lace parasol, a cream-coloured feather fan, an evening wrap of yellow and cream silk, and a brown jacket for chilly weather.

Barbara looked from the list to the delighted Bess Marguerite and sighed.

"Will I have to try all this on?" she asked, yawning.

"All the time," laughed Bess Marguerite.

Barbara shrugged her shoulders and went back to the hammock.

After a week of buying, every day in the city, the cutting began. They turned the spare room into a trying-on room. Barbara had resolved to have her clothes made at home.

The old gentleman took his meals in the library, away from the dress talk of the two girls and the three dressmakers in the dining-room; Autran went to the city every morning, paid calls and

l lounged in his club all day, dined there, and came home at midnight. He and Bess Marguerite were the only ones who kept their tempers—she, out of delight at managing her first wedding, he, because he was too indolent to be disturbed.

One night he came and found her still up and very tired—she spent most of her nights with Barbara now—and the next morning bore her off, in his easy masterfulness, to the city, in spite of her protests, bought her little things all the morning, took her to lunch, where, without her knowing how, there appeared everything she loved to eat, made her drink champagne, stuffed her with chocolate, left her with the hotel maid while he sauntered out to buy the tickets, and took her to a matinee. Afterwards he made her stay to dinner, stuffed her again, went out and bought more tickets, and made her go a second time to the theatre.

She nearly went to sleep on the train and could hardly walk upstairs when they got home, she was so tired.

"There," he said, looking up at her

where she stood leaning over the banisters to bid him good-night, her laughing eyes soft with slumber, "I have made you more tired than you were before, and ruined your digestion, and compromised you with all the neighbours, (if they weren't asleep), and it has done you good. Thank you immensely."

The fitting time was a trying one to Barbara. Every day she came down to lunch in her bath wrapper—her old bedroom wrapper was nearly worn out, and she did not wish to wear her new one. All the afternoon two of "the three graces," as Autran called the dressmakers, would kneel about her while the third bent over the machine and Bess Marguerite directed—pulling and pinning and bending back to note the effect while the victim stood wearily till fatigue rebelled and she ran from the monotonous torment till repentance brought her back to their protests.

The final rebellion came on the evening before the wedding night.

Bess Marguerite had been busy all day

arranging the decorations of the stairway and the dining-room, and the hall, and the library, where the dais took the place of the old gentleman's reading table in the window; consulting with the cook about the supper; and clearing the spare room for the men's hats and coats. The girls were to leave their wraps in Autran's room, which was larger. Autran had wisely protested against a church wedding on the ground that the time of year made it too hot to be married by daylight, and that the church was too far away to go at night.

At dusk "the three graces" were still touching and exclaiming about Barbara's last finished summer dress, while she stood tiredly, one hand on Bess Marguerite's strong young shoulder.

"Is it nearly through?" she asked.

"In a minute!" cried the head dress-maker rapturously. "Elsie, pull the fold a little more to the side—so! Ah, but that is quite—no, no! Not that. Leave that. Bring the lace down and pin it under the left shoulder—like a fichu—

yes—be careful of the plaiting. No, no! Not so high! The opening does not show the silk quite enough. Now the sleeves—so. No, no—pull it over a little. Yes. Now fasten the collar—quickly. Can't you find the eyes? Yes. Ah! see now—let me show you. Turn the right corner down this way until the lower corner is hooked—then bring it over and find the upper hook. No, no, don't put that lace there. Simply cross the fichu over the plaiting. No, no, leave that a little looser. Yes. I——”

“Stop!” cried Barbara.

She wrenched herself free of them and tore the clothes from her and rushed from the room.

Bess Marguerite found her sobbing on her bed.

“I won't stand it!” she wailed. “Those fool women! Do you think I will take their impertinence? Oh, Bess, I hate it all. I want to go away. For three weeks I've had it every day. I——”

She sat on the bed, her cheeks flushed, her brown hair wild about her head.

"I hate it!" she cried furiously, half laughing at herself, bringing her little fists down with a bang on the spread.

"Me, too," said Bess Marguerite from where she sat on the table. "But they're done now. Barbara!"

"What?"

"Do you know you're an awful little fool?"

Barbara snuffed.

"If I had such pretty dresses as you have I wouldn't go and weep about it," Bess Marguerite continued. "It must be lovely to get married if it makes you feel like this!"

"Leave me alone!"

"Good-by."

Bess Marguerite slammed the door behind her.

"Bess!"

She did not hear.

She flung herself exhausted into a chair in the trying room; the dress-makers gathered about her sympathetically.

"Poor dear child!" they murmured.

"Thanks," said Bess Marguerite ironically. "Thank God, it's nearly ended."

Her own dress was already done and lay on her bed at home among the littered finery ready for the next evening. The thought occurred to her with contemptuous clearness of how exaggerated was all this tumult that disarranged the lives of so many and turned into farce natural things that pious people called a sacrament. It seemed to her suddenly, all very foolish—not at all as she would have her marriage be. For a moment she dimly wondered if she were unhappy. The thought was to come back to her in after years.

She got up and went into Barbara's room.

"Feel better?" she said, hitching herself up on her invariable perch. "Barbara, how does it feel to be in love?"

Barbara turned sideways on the bed where she was lying.

"Beastly!" she replied. "You are all the time wondering about things that—that are all the time new to you—and you

don't know why, and the only nice thing about it is that you love to be afraid, and all the rest is just heartbreak and jealousy, with all the nasty cares of the world always breaking in."

"What are you in love for then?" said Bess Marguerite.

"I don't know."

"You have to be, I suppose?"

"Well," replied the girl on the bed, "you just wait till you get there. It isn't so much the man as a man, and when you get in the habit of him curiosity prompts you and you enjoy the danger. The trouble with most men is that they make themselves funny, sometimes by being tragic; when a man makes himself always real to you—especially if he knows you don't understand him—then you are very likely to fall in love with him, and then you pity him a little, you don't know why, and that makes you feel superior, and so you feel you own him and get jealous—and then it's all over—he belongs to you, and to make him belong to you, you've got to belong to him—and

if you're a bit afraid of him you like to."

"Umph!" said Bess Marguerite. "That's not my idea of it."

"You don't know," murmured Barbara disdainfully.

"I do."

"How?"

"I am in love."

"What!"

Barbara sat up on the bed.

"I always have been," said Bess Marguerite, "but I never met the man. He is the greatest man in the world—and I will probably run away with a fool—and he is waiting for me somewhere, and I am waiting for him."

"Bess Marguerite!" said Barbara dogmatically, "you are the most romantic girl in the world."

"I'm not!" cried the girl on the table, flushing hotly. "I'm sorry I told you. Don't you think I'm a woman?"

"I know that you don't know anything about men!" returned the girl on the bed. "You dream about knights in castles and

all you want is to be kissed. When a man begins to talk to you about low-necked dresses, and orders you to wear them higher, and asks you about when you had your ears pierced—that's a man. They are awfully foolish."

"Well!" exclaimed the girl on the table, "I don't talk like that to men about low-necked gowns, and you know very well that I've never had my ears pierced."

"You will, though," retorted Barbara. "It's part of being a girl. You are all the time dreaming of a sort of an angel kind of man——"

"I'm not," cried Bess Marguerite. "I want a bad one—one who has had lots of women and then falls in love with me for the first time in his life."

Barbara burst into a peal of laughter.

"Bess Marguerite," she exclaimed, "you're awful. Do you know what you want? You want a man who will love you in spite of your faults. They don't. They may love you because of them, but never in spite of them."

"Did Jonathan tell you that?" remarked Bess Marguerite, swinging her feet.

"Jack did not," returned Barbara.

One of the dressmakers knocked on the door. Bess Marguerite followed her into the trying-room with a gesture of despair.

In half an hour she was back again. She boosted herself up on the table and sat gazing sombrely at the window, now red with the last reflection of the sunset; the light fell upon her face—upon her little, piquant, turned-up nose, upon her rebellious mouth.

"What is the matter?" asked Barbara after a time.

"Nothing," said Bess Marguerite. "Barbara, our destinies are so different!"

"Why?"

"Because I'm not good like you. I——"

"Oh, fudge!" interrupted Barbara.

"What's the matter now?"

"I will be awfully lonely after you are gone. I've been thinking about it."

Barbara began to sniffle.

"I don't like anybody else," continued

Bess Marguerite. "I like you because you're nice. And I've been thinking about what you said, Barbara."

"What is it, dear?"

"Will you pierce my ears?"

"Why, yes," said Barbara, "if you want me to."

"I do."

"When?"

"Now."

"Truly? But——"

"Never mind."

"All right," replied Barbara. "But I don't know how very well. My old nurse did it to me. Get my work-basket."

Bess Marguerite brought it.

"No," said Barbara, "it is too dark here. Come over to the dressing-table—wait till I light the candles. That's better—oh, let me pull the shades down—now you kneel down in front of me."

"You know I have the diamond screw earrings my father gave me last Christmas," said Bess Marguerite. "Will it hurt much?"

"No," replied Barbara.

"I will wear them to-morrow night."

"I am going to wear mine," said Barbara. "You must leave the threads in till you are just about to put them on. I will cut them off close to the skin, so they won't show."

"Yes."

"Now hold still."

Bess Marguerite screamed.

"Oh!" she cried. "Is it through?"

"Yes, dear. There. Now let me pull the thread a little bit farther through—now the other—you have such pretty ears. I am piercing them just in the middle but quite a bit towards the tip."

"Oh, it hurts so!" exclaimed Bess Marguerite. "Oh, hurry."

Selecting the place, Barbara ran the needle through the other ear and Bess Marguerite gave another scream. When it was all done she surveyed herself in the glass.

"It is part of being a girl," she murmured.

Autran's step came up the stairs. He arrived early to-night in order to help with

any commissions he might give his assistance in. She was glad she had had it done.

She laughingly called the men's attention to it at dinner, and they laughed at her coquetry.

That night when she got home she cried for the first time in months, she did not know why. Barbara's marriage had raised some new feeling in her. She wanted something, she did not know what.

Meanwhile the old gentleman was delivering his before-marriage sermon to his daughter in the library into which he had called her after Bess Marguerite's departure.

He sat in his easy chair, his back to the bare space in the window that had replaced his writing-table, his delicate old hands touching their finger tips in front of his black coat, his gold eye-glasses dangling from their thread, his white hair falling about his placid, sweet, half-dreaming, unworldly face.

The girl sat on a hassock at his feet, her hands clasped about her knees.

"Marriage is a very serious step," began the old gentleman, "quite so. Such an alliance should be entered into soberly, and with a due sense of the responsibility—there should be a—a—mutual trust, and—affection—which should carry with it a proper reverence of the duties it implies.

"I think I may say that my counsels upon this subject may be divided and placed under five heads, to-wit: respect one another as your duty demands; be obedient to—a—your husband, accepting his greater experience of the world rather than trying to judge it for yourself—this will make him admire you the more."

"That is true," said Barbara.

"Eh? Yes. Surely. Thirdly, beware of temper, it is a foolish thing often repented; fourthly, impress your husband with the ability of your domesticity; you can best do this by concealing it from him."

"You have a higher opinion of men than I have," said Barbara.

"Men do not like to be troubled about

the household cares, my daughter," returned the old gentleman. "Remember that a good woman is like a good government—she attracts no attention."

"How terrible!" exclaimed Barbara with a shudder.

"Quite so," replied the old gentleman. "To continue—fifthly and lastly—remember that a good home makes a good husband——"

"Suppose he don't want to stay at home?" she interrupted.

"Then he—he—he is not a good husband," said the old gentleman. "When you are old—with—with your grandchildren about your knees, you will think differently of these things."

"But meanwhile?"

"As we look back," he continued, unheeding, "as we look back down the years to where our youth shines like a star on the horizon, it is an unutterable comfort to feel that we can say that pride has come through the days unsoiled and that we can face our Maker with equanimity, meek, but trusting to his mercy, secure

in the knowledge that we have done our best.

"The frivolities of life pass; pleasure fades like a flower; only conscience remains—conscience and pity and wisdom. It is goodness that makes life beautiful, not triumph. We should all try to live in such a manner, that, as we look back upon the—a—vista of the years, we may say that we have done no man wrong, that we have been open to counsel, quick to forgiveness, and more tolerant of other men's shortcomings than of our own. The man who can say this has not lived in vain; he is his own epitaph; and God will remember, even if men forget."

There was a long silence.

"Go, now," said the old gentleman gently.

Barbara got to her feet.

"Thank you, father," she answered, with a sigh.

She found Autran sitting in the hall.

"Well?" he asked.

"It is over," she replied.

"Now I will talk to you," he said.

She seated herself to listen.

But he did not begin.

"Suppose we have a glass of wine," he said at last, smiling a little. "It is late. Champagne—you get it for me."

Wondering, she brought it to him. He poured two glasses, lit a cigarette, and bowed from where he lounged in the chair.

"Good fortune!" he said, raising his glass. "Marriage, to a woman, is a business and a victory; to a man an accident and a burden. Always remember this, and treat your husband with the courtesy one extends to a victim and a benefactor. It is a strange thing that when the gentleman angles for the lady it is the fisherman that is caught by the fish. Have always courtesy; it flatters the humble, who have been treated with contempt; and impresses the proud with a sense of your self-control in the presence of their ostentation; always make a prince believe you cohabit with kings—courtesy compliments the fool, who believes in it, and

seduces the wise man, who doubts. Never be polite, it is bourgeois; be courteous.

"Don't feed a man's soul on the wrong diet. A wife had best be the physician of her husband's moods; you can't train a race horse on family milk, and the domestic cow doesn't like meat. Never deceive yourself into believing that anybody belongs to you or that you belong to anybody; each soul is its own; marriage is an expediency of civilization—which is an artificiality.

"If you haven't anything to say, be silent, it looks wise; but if you wish to be diplomatic talk much about nothing; silence breeds suspicion in the suspicious.

"Never confide anything to anybody except lies; confide many of them; it is practical, and it pleases the sympathetic. Veracity has no innate worthiness; it is to be respected only when it is useful. Frankness is the impertinence of the virtuous; never merely prevaricate; but use your imagination. This counsel would ruin the world if given to the ignoble and

unintellectual—for whom all rules, social and moral, are made.

“Have many acquaintances, but few friends. They are hard to get, harder to keep, and hardest of all to lose—but acquaintances amuse you without daring to burden you; friends never do the former and always do the latter. Be self-sufficient.

“Remember that all proverbs are lies and that no woman is so good that she couldn’t be bad; therefore, be tolerant to everybody except to the fools. Morality does not apply to a man; it is not the fashion for him to be narrow—except in the country. The best women I have known have been bad—of course I do not include the majority, who are nothing except what circumstance makes them.

“Select advice; never take it. Offer it; but never give it; withholding it impresses people either with their own wisdom or yours—and love and fear rule destiny.

“Always keep a secret bank account of a good sum.

"Now let us have another glass of wine."

"Is that all?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," laughed Autran.

"Why?"

"Because you will teach yourself the rest."

"Good fortune!" she replied, raising her glass and laughing back at him.

She fell into silence.

He sat looking at her.

"The last night of her girlhood!" he murmured to himself.

"How flat it all seems!" she exclaimed at last.

She yawned.

"I must go to bed."

She got up and went across to the stairs.

"Barbara!" Autran cried in a voice she had never heard.

She started, and turned towards him.

"What is the matter, Uncle Autran?" she cried.

He sat, his side-face turned towards her.

"Nothing," he said. "Good-night."

She went up the stairs till she came to the landing.

"Good-night," she called down.

He flicked the ashes from his cigarette. Somehow she was never to forget how she left him sitting there.

"Good-night," he said.

CHAPTER VII

THE WEDDING

The wedding presents were arranged in the alcove of the dining-room behind a screen, an alcove that was almost another room.

There was a silver tea service from Barbara's father, a gold toilet set from Bess Marguerite, a diamond sun-burst from Craige, and a picture of Resignation from May, specially painted by herself. In addition, there were five silver candy dishes, one cake knife, five dozen black coffee spoons, one plush photograph album, (from the cook), Ruskin's "Stones of Venice," Young's "Thoughts," a purple crushed levant Tennyson, five hand-painted bureau trays, one set of Japanese gongs, eleven embroidered picture scarfs, one music box, one fine lace handkerchief, five pairs of gold buckles,

five diamond pins, a picture of the Saviour, a Japanese kimona, and seven clocks.

Autran surveyed the display after breakfast, the two girls clinging delightedly to his arms.

"I will never call," he said emphatically.

"Why?" they both cried together, leaning against him laughingly.

"Madame will wear the kimona, feed me with confectionery, cake and black coffee, all of which I will have to eat with a spoon, or my fingers; then I will wipe my hands on the lace handkerchief below the picture of Resignation, and read Young while the seven clocks strike. I respect an ideal home. If I get tired of Young I can turn on the music box and ring the gongs. Now let me give you one of my presents."

He took a paper from his pocket.

"I have something personal for you upstairs, something that will make you laugh, but this is only a little secret between us three, not to be put on the table

with the other things. I give it as your guardian, which, thank God, I'm not, you impossible young nuisance!

"I have invested for you a sum that will bring you in exactly five hundred dollars a year—not much, but enough.

"You cannot touch the principal nor transfer the interest, and take my advice and leave the interest where it is unless you absolutely need it; it will compound."

"Oh, Uncle Autran!"

"Now come up-stairs and see the joke."

"Here," he said, pulling a silk blanket from a huge trunk that stood in a corner of his bedroom, "is something that will make you laugh. Having no mother or sisters, you would not be given such things. You can send for them, when you return from your wedding trip, if you are not boarding as you speak of doing.

"There are three dozen towels, and half a dozen table-cloths, with three dozen napkins. There are a dozen sheets, three spreads, and a dozen pillow-slips. Then I took the liberty of adding some kitchen

towels, and some good steel knives, with some forks and spoons, and a good full work-basket with what you might need in it."

The wedding was to be at eight o'clock, the Reverend Doctor Tonnage officiating.

The decorators were already in the house, stringing smilax from windows to chandeliers, and pinning roses to the curtains, and in the kitchen the caterers had driven out the cook, and strange little swarthy men jabbered French in the dining-room, arranging the table for the wedding supper.

Craige and Satterlee arrived at five o'clock and went into Autran's room to dress. Bess Marguerite and Barbara retired to the latter's room after a bite of supper at six. The Reverend Tappan wandered about like a lost ghost, a volume of Tacitus under his arm and rose leaves on his shoulders.

The Reverend Tonnage arrived at seven o'clock, and a few minutes after came the girl who was to play the wedding march at the piano in the end of the

dining-room. Then the guests began to come.

Autran took Craige and Satterlee into the bathroom to have them out of the way, and lit the gas, and the three sat on the edge of the bathtub, while the voices and footsteps came to them dimly through the closed door. They were to go down the back stairs and through the dining-room and meet Barbara as she came down the main staircase.

The Reverend Tonnage tapped at the door.

"I have just been told by a maid that it is time," he said.

"Let us go, then," replied Autran.

They groped their way down the back stairs, the four of them, Craige, Satterlee, Autran and the minister—the minister leading—through the kitchen, where the caterer's assistants made polite way, into the dining-room, where the pianist sat waiting at the piano.

"Have a peg, Craige?" said Autran.

Craige gulped down the whiskey hastily.

The whole room was green and yellow.

Yellow-shaded candles replaced the gas jets on the chandeliers, glowed in sconces around the walls, and stood in candelabra on the table, which was heaped with smilax and yellow chrysanthemums. The smilax drooped in festoons from chandelier to cornice and hung over doors and windows like a green lacy drapery. The great yellow flowers were everywhere. The place was a flame of light as if seen through a yellow haze.

From beyond the drawn portieres came the hushed whispers of the guests assembled in the library.

"Oh, damn!" whispered Satterlee impatiently, striking his white glove on the other hand in nervous impatience.

Craige trembled noticeably.

There was a rush of feet behind them as Bess Marguerite, who had run down the back stairs after them, holding her lacy skirts about her, burst through the kitchen door.

"Where is Doctor Tappan?" she cried. "She is coming!"

She was adorable in her wonderful cre-

ation of cream and yellow that swirled about her with a certain ravishing coquetry of half-revelment—a cloud of lace flying from a yellow silk ankle—the yellow and white suggesting the curve of a shoulder as she faced them with a shrug of impatience.

“In the hall,” said Autran.

She ran.

“Strike up!” he cried to the pianist.

The notes of the wedding march rose on the waiting stillness; the caterers’ assistants ran back the library portieres along their rods, revealing the crowd huddled before the dais. From outside in the night came the faint sound of a cheer from the coachman and his friends gathered in front of the piazza. Everybody craned forward to see the bride. Bess Marguerite and the Reverend Tappan stood at the bottom of the steps.

She appeared at the head of the stairs, the maids’ and dressmakers’ faces forming a background as they leaned over the banister watching her. There was a great “Ah!”

Her cream white gown swept behind her with a regal daintiness. Under the flying lace cloud of her veil her fluffy hair shadowed her face just to the tip of the little nose. She slowed her descent a little on the landing and looked at the people, not proudly, but with a certain shy half-laughter; her eyes were lost in the shadow as the yellow flame of radiance fell full upon her face from under the festooned ceiling, from the flower-covered walls and staircase among the lights.

Then she came on down, took her father's arm, and, preceded by her maid of honor, passed into the crowd, the black form of Craige meeting her before the dais.

To Autran there seemed to be a distant and strange sound of words. The feeling of unnaturalness had been growing upon him. He began to think, for some mad reason, of one of his early love affairs.

(They sat in the garden behind the café that is just outside the entrance to the

forest at Saint Cloud—an old man played a sad song on a violin and sang about the cherry times of other years. Margy lifted her glass of Rhine wine and sipped, glancing at him—)

He was aware that he was standing there in front of the crowd, the shirt sticking to his body with cold sweat, his face smiling like that of the Sphinx—

(How sweet the roses smelled—the roses in her breast! From under her great hat her sleepy eyes glanced towards him for one moment, inscrutable; the violin squeaked its wavering wail and the ancient voice, (cracked in the high notes), rose in the spring sunshine between the vine-clad, stucco walls with a heartbreaking pathos of gay memories gone forever, when he, too—the singer—was young. Margy lifted her glass again—)

He was awakened by a voice—Satterlee's.

"May I be the first to congratulate you, Mrs. Craige?"

"And I—and I—and I," came the chorus.

"And I the last," he said, bowing before her.

The little Frenchmen were running about with small tables, placing them in the library and in the entrance hall. There was a pandemonium of voices, through which the sobbing of May rose like a comedy.

At the table in the dining-room the bride sat at the head with Craige, the Reverend Doctor Tonnage, and Satterlee; along the sides were the delighted throng of the immediate friends; the father, Autran and Bess Marguerite, were at the foot. From the hall and library came the hum of the crowd, broken by the quick voices of the waiters running from table to table.

The caterer himself filled the glasses. Autran rose to his feet.

There was a sudden hush. The people from the other rooms crowded to the door ways.

"My friends," he began.

"Hear, hear!" cried a voice.

"My friends, the Reverend Doctor Tap-

pan has asked me to propose the health and happiness of the bride. He has said that I am not so old as he is, and yet that I stood towards her almost in the relation of a father.

"You will allow me to repeat to you an anecdote. There was a Queen of Provence; her name was Macée; an hundred knights loved her and wooed her in vain, for she chose another and jilted them of their love. They resolved to die at her wedding feast on her wedding night. But one among them, an old knight, weary of wars, rose and said, 'No; let us rather drink to her, for it is braver to live than die.' So the jilted knights rose and drank to her, standing, with one great cry of her name, 'Macée!'

"I am wondering what any words of mine can wish the bride, which you have not all wished her in your hearts and could speak as well as I. I am searching for some novel blessing for her, some new happiness which those merely commonly lovable cannot comprehend.

"But the world is old and weary, and

neither our joys nor our sorrows are original, and we return again to the dream—the dream of life that will never come true—the dream whose life makes existence worth living. What can we wish more than that she who leaves us desolate may remember without desolation, than that she who leaves us lonely may never be sad, than that she who bears away with her so much of our joy may keep that glad gift so ungrudgingly given and live in the happiness that she deserves—one could wish nothing greater.

“A congratulation upon so momentous an occasion as this should partake almost of the nature of a prayer, for the happiness of it is equalled only by its significance. The two reverend gentlemen present—one in a professional, and the other in an even more sacred capacity—will, I am sure, sympathise with a sinner in this attitude of humility. Nevertheless I will venture to present to the bride two sadly-gained bits of truth—you should be your own claque, and to be debonaire is the greatest of braveries.

"What, then, shall we drink to? The good wishes you all have in your hearts—I—not least—not least.

"Ladies and gentlemen, as it was of old among the jilted in the Court of Love, I ask you to drink standing—I give you a name—Barbara!"

They drank it on their feet, and the company broke up, Bess Marguerite taking Barbara away to put on her traveling dress, and Satterlee rushing up-stairs with Craige. Barbara threw her bouquet from the landing and May caught it amid the scramble of girls.

The guests shouted laughing blessings upon her; her old father embraced her passionately; Bess Marguerite managed everything. May wept loudly.

"Where is Uncle Autran?" asked Barbara.

He was not there.

She took Craige's arm and they passed out into the starlight.

As they crossed the threshold a crowd of girls charged on them from the shadows of the piazza; they fled to the car-

riage door in a storm of rice—a boot struck Craige on the ear.

The door slammed with a hollow report.

Bess Marguerite received the good-nights of the guests—she was to spend the night in the house. It was eleven o'clock before the last one went.

When she went up to her room she did not undress; she could not sleep. She sat in a chair in her gorgeous dress, staring straight, unseeing, at the dozen candles that burned in the candelabra on the bureau.

Where was Autran? It seemed to her that a great black cloud had shut down on Barbara's life, blotting out her girlhood. She could not explain the feeling. She was afraid.

Minute succeeded minute.

She heard the front door open softly; in a moment she was looking over the banisters.

He closed the door gently. He was bareheaded, the dew on his white shirt and glistening on his shoulders; his face,

under its wild white hair, pallid as porcelain. The mouth trembled with agony repressed; the forehead was drawn with anguish.

He stumbled to his great chair in front of the empty hearth. The scene was lit with a sort of hellish dimness by the glow of one red-globed lamp on the mantelpiece; the blood-coloured light crimsoned the shadowy festoons of still unremoved smilax and turned the yellow chrysanthemums to a cluster of flame.

He lit a cigarette.

Bess Marguerite came down the stairs and knelt by him, resting her arms across the side of his chair.

Neither spoke. He touched the ashes from his cigarette with one finger.

The clock struck one—one, single, hollow, fateful, portentous note.

* * * * *

Craige dismissed the carriage at the station, took the tickets, and assisted Barbara into the train. They hardly spoke during the hour it took them to get to Jersey City.

On the ferry-boat she went outside in the bow.

She stood looking out over the black water, under the stars that seemed so far away. She remembered that day when she had leaned thus in the afternoon sunlight watching the great packs of ice drift past; she remembered the French steamer going out; once again she heard the faint echo of the Marsellaise. For one moment she seemed, in her heart, to catch a glimpse of the gay boulevards of Paris of which Autran had told her so much. The scent of roses came to her in the blaze of lights, the crowds, the gayety, the laughter——

She roused herself with a shudder—she wondered why. The midnight water flowed like black ink. From far away came the lights of the New York shore. It seemed cold.

They took a carriage at the ferry and drove through the empty streets, up desolate Fifth Avenue to the Brevoort House.

They had to wake the night clerk. A porter carried their baggage up-stairs.

Barbara went to the bridal chamber window, and stood, looking silently out into the darkness.

"I wonder what they are doing now," she murmured, half to herself. "Autran did not see me go. I wonder—Autran—and Bess Marguerite—— I wonder—"

The clock struck one.

CHAPTER VIII

HONEYMOON

After a day of shopping they took the boat the next afternoon at five o'clock for Block Island, where they had arranged to spend their honeymoon. They sat on the deck that night, in a black corner, each with an arm around the other, ecstatic in their new intimacy, an intimacy so new that the negative delight of shyness tempted them with a constant hint.

The boat tied up at the wharf at ten o'clock the next morning and they climbed into the rickety stage that trundled them over the dusty road to the hotel on the other side of the island.

It was a huge wooden structure on the summit of a terraced lawn that sloped to the one street of the village below. The piazzas were very wide and lined with wil-

low arm-rockers. In front, a crazily Japanese summer-house glared yellow upon a turf of green; the dining-room was a bare hall whose vastness awed the five hundred guests to silence.

Their room was in front, looking down over the lawns, beyond the wooden steps that led to the road, upon the long pier that stretched its way out into the gray water till it terminated, beyond its end platform, in a stone-heaped, straggling breakwater.

The island was like a quilted cushion of green brown sackcloth with sheared off cliffs of black iron-sand bounding it; farm houses nestled in the deeper green of the little depressions, each one of which held a lily-pond, where, under the summer moonlight, throaty frogs croaked from the reeds in the emerald skum.

Every night there was dancing in the hotel, where the guests from the other houses would come to take advantage of the German orchestra. Between dances the duck-trousered youths and muslin-clad maidens would promenade the piazzas in

the cool of the sea breeze, flirting in understood falsity under the Japanese lanterns

Barbara, in her complete ecstasy, hardly noticed any of them. The man she had married was hers! When, sitting in the afternoon in a huge chair on the piazza, dreaming over a book whose title she had forgotten, she saw his square shoulders rise above the rail of the steps fifty feet away, she would have to repress the start she gave lest the older women about her would laugh at her, and therefore at him. She was half ashamed of her pride.

Dreams of impossible abandon came to her. She wondered what he would do if she should kiss his boots, then shook her senses together again with an effort. During his short absences—though he was seldom away from her, preferring to sit and watch her, his obvious admiration in his eyes—she caught herself holding a glove or stick, or even a handkerchief—and blushed at her own romance.

The days passed uneventfully. There were drives to the South Light with the

Berkeleys, an English family; some fishing trips after the huge flounders that came up, wavering like squares of gray and white paper, through the gray water off the eastern cliffs, and some dusty walks through the dipping hollows of the interior.

Every Saturday night there was a hop at the hotel.

It was after the second of these that Barbara's first quarrel occurred.

Craige was becoming bored by the monotony. He was resolved to spend four weeks here, because he believed four weeks to be the correct time, but the guests were already leaving; it was too cold for bathing, and business was reawakening in New York.

The monotony of the honeymoon was on him. The gayety of the hotel palled upon him suddenly; the uselessness of the situation occurred to his exclusively practical nature almost with a sense of ridicule, of disgust.

This constant sentimentality dragged on him.

With a shrug of annoyance he rose and left the ballroom.

Miss Walsingham, a stout, keen, widely traveled Boston old maid, with whom Barbara was sitting, watched him go with a sharp glance of comprehension.

"Sit still, child," she said, "men need to be alone sometimes."

Barbara fidgeted.

"Why don't you go over there across the room and talk with your English friends?" the old lady suggested, after a moment. "Those Berkeleys are very nice people."

"You think I'm a fool," said Barbara, smiling mournfully.

"No, child," said the old lady. "But I think you are in love, and that an older woman would fear nothing more than to be exigent."

Barbara crossed over to the Berkeleys, who were beckoning to her. They wanted her to go sword-fishing with them, leaving at half past two o'clock in the morning and getting in at about ten. She would have to stay up till the

boat was ready, and put on a heavy dress.

She wandered out on the piazza to convey the invitation to Craige, acutely conscious of the laughing eyes turned in her direction.

She found him leaning on the rail of the piazza, smoking a cigar lonesomely.

"The Berkeleys want to know if we want to go sword-fishing with them at half past two," she said.

"And stay up all night?" he asked, disgustedly.

"You are lonely, sweetheart," she whispered, leaning against his arm, accepting his declination as a matter of course.

He stood looking wearily out over the shadowy expanse of sea, where the yacht lights waved gently, heaving under the starlight. From the night came the soft, incessant whispers of the little waves upon the breakwater.

The languorous swing of a Straus waltz floated out to them on the still air; the violin wail swayed like an ocean, till the soft bang of brass clashed and rang into

a gypsy measure where the drums throbbed the time to the cello's ironic groans, then again the violins rose to a shrill cry above the sombre roar—wavered—and, heralded by a few lonely, throaty notes on the oboes—swung once more into the wave-like sweep of the tune as with a swoop of swinging, ecstatic wings.

"Oh, sweetheart!" the girl whispered. "What is the matter? Are you unhappy? Come to me. I have been shy about confessing to you that I—I do—you know, dear one, that every bit of romance I have ever had is bound up with you. I—I—sweetheart, please love me."

The man sighed.

"Barbara," he said, "do you know you are very sentimental. You know very well that I love you. I suppose the honeymoon palls on a man. He wants to get settled."

"Settled?" she repeated, a breathless fear coming over her, an instant amazement at something she did not understand, something too strange to be

consistent with the dreams that had become her reality.

"We will be more comfortable when we get our own home," he said. "I love you with my whole heart, but I cannot imagine——"

"No," she spoke, an infinite bitterness in her voice.

"Now, Barbara," he exclaimed, all of his fatigue flaring up into exasperation, "I am at least intelligent enough to know perfectly what you mean. Thank God, I am not one of those artistic fellows! I can support you, and I will. I offer to you a respectable, comfortable, loving home—all that any woman could possibly ask! What more do you want?"

"You are a sensible woman. You know very well that I love you, that I am going to be true to you, that you are absolutely well grounded, that life opens out before you with definite promise.

"You see your future definite before you—most women don't——"

There was a pause.

She stood, a white shadow against the

black of the piazza wall, her arms stretched out as if grasping some rail along the side. He could not see her eyes.

"Barbara!" he began, angrily.

She appeared in the ballroom doorway, a little out of breath. A face of absolute pride met the mirth of the crowd of eyes.

She made her way across the waxed floor to where the Berkeleys sat in their exclusive corner.

Her spirit flamed in her eyes. Her voice was cold with a new self-possession, yet tremulous a little on the high notes.

"No," she said to Mrs. Berkeley's inquiry, "Mr. Craige has given me permission to accept your most kind invitation alone. I will be charmed, I am sure."

Berkeley put up his eyeglass and gazed at her formally.

Miss Walsingham sailed across the room with her air of the Grande Dame and seated herself by the girl.

"My dear Mrs. Berkeley," she cried, "I think you are a very selfish woman!"

The English lady smiled.

"Why?" she queried, understanding perfectly.

"Because you do not ask me to your sword-fishing," replied the old lady. "I adore it. I have caught eels in Russia, and salmon in Scotland, and—something in the Seine—and tarpon in Florida, and tunny off Boulogne—in the season—but I never before had the opportunity to catch a sword-fish. I'm going with you!"

"My dear Miss Walsingham—delighted, I'm sure!" chorused the Berkeleys.

"Now we have only an hour, haven't we?" interrupted the old lady. "Child, come. You shall get another dress and change in my room."

She held Barbara's hand, and, holding it under her expansive brocaded satin sleeve, led her away.

"I never caught a fish in my life," she whispered in the hallway. "Don't go to the opposite extreme. Try to be natural. Give him a chance for miscomprehension."

She would not let the girl cry; she hur-

ried her to her room, bundled up a thick dress, and rushed her to her own chamber, where, with an old woman's privilege, she threw herself back in her chair and directed the girl where to find her heavy boots.

"Are you sure you want to go?" whispered Barbara with shining eyes of gratitude.

The old lady gave a snort. She had the heavily-lined face of a man and her habits were more masculine than feminine. Beneath an exterior as rough as a longshoreman's she carried the heart of a mother and the tact of a diplomat.

"Of course?" she sneered.

Barbara knelt at her feet with the heavy boots.

"Thanks," said madame — everyone called her madame. "Lace 'em tight. Do you know what I think? Well, I think that when people have false troubles it almost does them good to have real ones. And the realest thing on earth is money. Now, I knew a family in Boston who quarrelled like devils and angels, my dear,

until one day the devil lost his money, and they had to open a shop, and actually became friends—pull 'em a little tighter at the top!

“To a man, the worst thing about marriage is that it keeps him from marrying anybody else; to a woman, if she has any conscience, that she has got to make the man believe that he has the best of the bargain! I can quite understand falling in love; I have,—dozens of times,—but thank God I always had too much sense of humour to be able to stand reciprocity. Men are more easily bored than women, child, and they haven't been educated to act. Men are stupid creatures but way ahead of women in what I call applicableness; women are vastly finer theorizers.

“You see it's all a matter of intention; the boy is trained to fight and get; the girl is trained to need and have! And, so far as love is concerned, for God's sake don't sit on him for seventeen hours like a coroner's jury and bring in a verdict of dead for various reasons! Don't chase.

It reverses the positions. The lonely man is the vulnerable one—give 'em a chance to be lonely,—and, for the Lord's sake, remember that a husband is a man underneath!"

She ended her lecture with a grunt expressive of self contempt and proceeded to help the girl on with her dress.

"What's Craige been saying to you?" madame mumbled, her mouth full of pins.

She wanted to swear—a habit she had, to a certain degree—but restrained the desire out of uncertainty of the girl before her.

"Nothing."

"Umph! That would be worse, if you were saying the truth."

Barbara was stubbornly silent.

Her questioner went on hooking and pinning with a constant series of smothered disapprovals.

"Are you angry?" ventured the girl at last.

"I'm in love."

"I——"

"With you, you little black pig! I love

to animal my acquaintances. Hold still!"

The sloop was waiting at the dock—a half-cabined boat with the pulpit, a half-circle of iron on an iron rod, on the end of her bowsprit.

The master, a red-haired young man in sea boots, clambered down from the wharf on to the deck and extended one huge hand to the party—Berkeley, Mrs. Berkeley, Miss Walsingham and Barbara Craige. At the last moment young Egbert, Berkeley's brother, and a girl he had persuaded, jumped aboard with a shout. But, to excuse themselves, they brought a basket of champagne, some Swiss cheese, and three dozen sandwiches, and were let in, ostensibly, on the score of the provisions.

The myriad port holes of the hotel had gone out, only on the dock there was a silent night activity.

Lanky ancients in blue-jeans gasped, flopping meal bags to the grasping hands of lithe, sweated, hurrying young men below. A tangle of masts ribbed the

obscurity; the veins of cordage ran across the sky in a webwork of black threads; from the masthead of the boat a red lantern hung, sending bloody spears of light over the water, wavering in the half darkness.

There was a feeling of unnaturalness, as of something almost uncanny. It affected the spirits of all the party.

The boat moved off with a splashing of ropes in the water and a hoarse chorus as the three deckmen heaved on the hal-yards of the gaff. The mournful sound of the voices was weird in the dark.

They went out of the inner harbor, past the red lantern on a pole, and rounding the breakwater, stood out to sea.

Barbara was drowsy. The monotonous lapping of the water under the hollow side soothed her almost to sleep. Leaning on the cushions in the bow, it seemed to her as if this dark sailing was forever, as if this slow, aimless, blind motion would never cease. The novelty of it all awed her—this still moving in the night over the sea, upon which one long

shaft of light from the red lantern lay like a bloody sword thrown down beneath the starlight upon a piece of black velvet.

The stillness oppressed them all, unconsciously they spoke in whispers. The fishermen were the sort that never speak except when necessary. Mrs. Berkeley and the girl from the hotel curled up and went to sleep. The two Englishmen retired with their pipes to the stern. Madame stayed awake out of sympathy with Barbara. There was not a sound save the soft lapping of the water under the side.

It all seemed very wonderful to Barbara. The immensity of the night gradually uplifted her soul; the inspiration of those three sublimites, silence, darkness, and vastness, sank into her spirit.

Suddenly all the affairs of life seemed very trivial to her—anger, jealousy, blame, were not worth while. She felt so small here in the night; how could she have made a tragedy out of such infinitesimal things?

"It's not worth while," she whispered, stealing her hand into madame's.

There was a quick answering pressure.

"No, child," whispered the old lady.

Barbara realized that her first disillusion was over, and that she had risen above it. But, even with the realization, came a new, keen sense of loneliness—not such a loneliness as she had ever known before—a strange desolation of heart, as if a dream were past. It was gone again in a moment, and, as she looked toward the east, a single thread of flame-coloured yellow lengthened along the horizon.

The mist hung heavy on the sea in the dawn. Far away the sails of two other boats appeared above the chill vapour that hid their hulls. A man hauled down the red lantern and turned it out with a slight pop.

"By Jove!" cried Berkeley to his wife, knocking out the ashes of his pipe on the stern rail. "Wake up, Ethel! It reminds me of Ludgate Hill at five o'clock on an

October morning, all but the poor devils of beggars."

"You wicked boy!" she returned, unwinding the blue veil from her face. "What do you know about Ludgate Hill at five o'clock in the morning?"

"Can't you almost hear the boom of the bell in Saint Paul's?" he cried. "Listen, it will come directly."

"It'll clear soon," said the captain. "All right, Dan."

Dan stood up and stretched himself, his harpoon, which he had been preparing, in his hand. He made his way forward along the bowsprit and lashed himself into the pulpit gingerly. The mist was going now, wafting away in wreaths and curls like smoke, and the surface of the placid sea appeared, dimly polished like dull silver in the growing light.

"They find the fish asleep, or swimming slowly, on the top of the water," Berkeley explained, "and they steal up on him and harpoon him. Horrid eating — beastly dry."

"Boston," said the captain, "like 'em there."

Mrs. Berkeley and Barbara got out the breakfast basket.

"No, thanks," said the captain. "We got ours. Jim, take this pie up to Dan."

An hour passed. Nothing happened. The breakfast things were put away.

The girl from the hotel began to giggle.

There was a flash, and an exclamation from Dan. Leaping to their feet they were only in time to see him leisurely hauling in his line.

"Missed!" said the captain, spitting over the side.

There was a chorus of exclamations of disappointment.

"He's got one," said the captain, jerking his free hand over his shoulder towards the nearest of the other two boats. "Saw him take it in."

"Why didn't you tell us?" cried Mrs. Berkeley.

"Warn't our affair."

"Are you rivals?" asked young Berkeley, quizzically.

"Brothers," said the captain, spitting over the side again. "His business ain't mine; we ain't partners."

He turned his sour face towards the sun and squinted knowingly along the horizon, gauging the weather.

"An' we ain't enemies," he concluded. "Just relatives."

As he finished this exposition of family life Dan drew in his line again.

The other two fishermen grunted.

Berkeley pulled out his watch.

"Seven o'clock," he began. "Eh?"

The captain was leaning forward following a motion of Dan's hand. Everyone rushed to the right-hand side of the boat. The captain motioned for silence.

"I see it!" whispered Barbara, excitedly. "There; that gray thing—a sort of little point sticking up out of the water."

The boat changed its direction slightly, but not enough to risk jibing.

Dan was leaning far out over the water; the blade of his low-held harpoon caught the sunlight like a flame. The boat moved without a sound, carefully manoeu-

vred so that her shadow would be away from the fish.

Dan stiffened himself. The gray shape was just visible below the surface, the long upper point of the tail protruding.

"Oh, now, you know,"—began young Berkeley in a stage whisper.

A flash of light passed from the boat to the gray shape; there was a splash, a few drops struck the watchers in the faces. Nothing was to be seen except a swirl in the water where the fish had been; nothing was to be heard except the swift whisper of rope as it ran through Dan's fingers.

"Hold him, or want the keg?" shouted the captain.

"Ease her. Only a little one," came the voice from the bow.

The fish broke water a hundred feet ahead. A sharp jerk went through the boat as Dan braced himself and took a grip on the rope.

"Ease her, loose her!" he cried.

The captain kept the sloop's course nearly at right angles to the pull on the

rope, in order to give that spring which the curve of the rod gives in rod fishing.

Dan had wrapped the end of the line around the wire rope behind him and lay back on the tautness, never giving the fish the slack.

It broke water now every few seconds, sending the sparkling spray high in the sunlight. The two fishermen smoked quietly; the rest were wild with excitement, the ladies laughing and grasping the men every time the boat jerked, and crying out to one another, the men craning forward in the effort to see.

"Draw in," said the captain. "Bring him in, Dan."

Through the splashing spray that half hid the struggle, they could see occasionally the white under-side of the fish as it turned towards the sunlight.

Slowly and inevitably it came alongside, feebly, on its back, its long beak scraping on the boards.

The captain seized an ax; young Berkeley leaped to the tiller.

"Get back!" he shouted to the women.

They huddled in the bow. From below the dipping side, over which the fishermen leaned, came the dull sound of heavy blows.

One of the men grabbed a rope from the top of the cabin and looped it over the rail. There was a scrambling rush; the huge shape tumbled over the side; one of the men fell backwards on his head and sprawled out of the way, his face slimy from a blow of the monster's tail. It gave a few more gasps, and, when Berkeley touched it with his toe, one last leap, and lay dead.

The two fishermen with a heave slid the body along by the other side of the cabin, while Dan, who had come from the pulpit, dashed buckets of water over the slippery deck.

It was too late for more fishing. They turned home, the women a little frightened at the brutality.

They arrived at half past ten. Barbara flew to Craige's arms on the deck.

"My little one!" he whispered.

"I have been a little fool," she mur-

mured. "But I've had such a good time!"

They walked down to the postoffice at twelve o'clock, when the mail was distributed, everybody turning to look at Barbara in her white dress and fluffy, huge lace hat.

She received a letter from her father.

Among other things, he said: "You know that Autran departed several days ago for Paris, leaving me desolate. He says you know his invariable address there, and that he will write to you when he gets settled. Your friend Bess Marguerite is also gone—abroad to travel with her father. She will write explaining. Your going has disturbed us all very greatly. Before she left she came and brought me some roses. She is a good girl. Please write to your friend May. She weeps constantly. I am sorry. She sent me some guava jelly."

Barbara was very quiet that night—quiet till Craige worried over her.

The next day the Berkeleys left, with numerous protestations of friendship.

The hotel was emptying rapidly. The huge dining-room was nearly desolate. After the farewell hop there was no more dancing in the evening—only the music in the lonely hall.

The days passed. Even madame left.

The sea was gray beyond the breakwater, and the fishing boats were drawn up and housed over along the shore.

The chill water dashed over the pier in the storms at twilight when the sun burned out like a fire upon the black western horizon and the dusk, in which the slow-coming stars shown very cold and far away, fell over the sea like an early night, sombre and shadowless.

They sat in the evening on the solitary piazza, wrapped in their heavy coats, while the music wailed lonely dances in the deserted dancing hall. They were the last guests at the hotel.

It was on their final night that they sat side-by-side in two huge chairs on the piazza.

The whisper of the sea breaking on the breakwater came like a moan, inces-

santly on the wind, through the dark.
The season was done.

From behind, in the empty dance room, sounded the faint tones of violins, tuning and scraping.

It was the last tune.

They both realised it. The desolation of the end of a never regainable mood of life was upon them. Craige sat silent. Barbara thought of her girl-life, of Bess Marguerite, somewhere on that other wondrous side of the world; of Autran ironically sipping his "Pernod" on the Paris boulevards outside his Café du Cardinal.

Neither spoke.

There was a moment of silence; in the stillness she heard the tap of the leaders' baton on the desk.

The last dance floated out on the air—"Sweet Dreamland Faces."

It was the waltz of her first dance—of her first girl's party—it seemed so many years ago!

The sound of the chill waves dashing on the breakwater came faintly through

the dark. The cold of the autumn was in the air.

The last music came softly from the deserted ballroom—

“Sweet dreamland faces, vanished long ago——”

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST YEAR

They came back to New York on the last boat of the season—the only passengers—sitting silently, side by side, in the desolate cabin under the evil odoured swinging lamp.

They took the second floor of a house on Lexington Avenue, just below Twenty-ninth Street, going to an hotel while furnishing their rooms.

There were two chambers in front, one very large one which they fitted up as a parlour, and one small room alongside for a sort of study, and a big bedroom in the back with a bath. The old French woman who kept the house, a Madame Jouin, brought up their coffee and rolls and eggs to the study every morning; Barbara lunched where she pleased, or had her midday meal cooked in the

house, while Craige had his down town; and they went out somewhere to dine together every evening.

Craige, experiencing the reaction from the enforced, and therefore rebelled—against rest of the honeymoon, flung himself into practical affairs with a new keenness, like all commonplace men, gaining zest from marriage rather than losing by it, yet untaunted by the spur of necessity which spurs greater men in spite of their disillusion. Having in the commonplaceness of his ideal, arrived at a certain level in the course of life—the station of respectable matrimony—he took a great breath of relief, and, in the exultance of self-satisfaction, proceeded to the doing of what, to his narrow intellect, appeared as both his interest and his duty.

His bank account was a good one—though under the unconscious influence of Barbara's teaching, he had ceased his juvenile bombast of "self-making" and begun to try to be in sympathy with art, history and civilization—and he began to increase his fortune with the use of all

his careful qualities of nerve and caution.

Barbara, living now in the life of the city to which he was so used, felt the reaction from the country monotony. She wanted to be out; to see the glare of the streets, to go to theatres, to meet people, to see, to get away from the haunting, sick-sweet memory, to forget, to begin.

But Craige, though he took her to theatre parties, and had his friends call upon her, considered that enough, and, proud of the well-to-do, pleasant propriety in which they lived, smiled in a satisfied content, which, she realized in terror, was impregnable to any illumination and which criticism would only confuse.

Satterlee, the best man, called more often now. Barbara, a new sadness in her eyes—they had always held a certain hint of a soft sadness beneath their dreamy laughter—gave him tea in the winter twilight, talking to him in the old-time gayety which the sympathy of his presence released, trusting him the more for his silence.

She had frequent letters from Bess Marguerite, characteristically short ones of ironic flirtations, one with an English rake, one with a German officer, one with a Danish count, and a constant series of scolding love letters from Miss Walsingham.

On Christmas eve she crouched in the twilight over the fire; the windows were tall squares of black. Craige would be coming soon. She had been reading a letter from Bess Marguerite. At its close it grew more than usually friendly.

"Child," it read, with the air of an older woman, "our lives have come apart now—just the way we used to pull apart walnut shells, (I wonder if the kernel was meat or ashes?)—and so, you know—no, you don't know, that is the trouble! Me, I have—well, I have become 'Bess Marguerite!' I was 'Bess' in the old days; only Autran called me Bess Marguerite. I am wondering about you. Tell me, are you happy? I feel so much older, even though I am so much of a tomboy! But if you ever need a friend, remember that

there is one woman who stands here, hand out. Now, don't be a fool and dread that, if you need me, I am like the rest! I'm a jilt, and a tomboy, and a flirt, and a selfish woman, and a man friend. (Bosh!) Bess Marguerite."

It grew darker and darker.

She wondered where Bess Marguerite was now, in those foreign lands which she pictured to herself. She sat gazing at the fire.

She started at the click of the downstairs door, but remained kneeling in front of the fire.

The door behind her opened and Craige entered boisterously, his arms full of bundles.

She sprang erect, hiding her maudlin-ness in a sudden shame under his tender gayety.

"Look behind the door!" he cried.

Her father caught her in his arms.

It was a happy Christmas, and after she had received all her presents—presents she had longed for—and after her father had gone to his specially prepared bed

in the study and her husband had retired, she was crouched by the fire again, alone, the wifts of torn tissue paper about her, the candles curving from their holder's in the heat of the shadowy room. Outside the snow lay heaped upon the window sills, the white opaqueness reaching nearly to the middle bars.

She thought over Bess Marguerite's letter.

It seemed cold, hard, self-boasting. Then, gradually, it began to grow upon her how commonplace any such personal letter from her would seem—how provincial, how inexperienced. Bess Marguerite was feeling the inspiration of those lands that Barbara had thought of an hour or two ago, when the fire was dying, she was wrapt in a dream which every reality made the greater—

The very selfishness of the joy stung her; gradually, a pain, beginning as with a tap of tack-hammers, increased to the bang of sledges on her brain.

She had one swift vision of Craige, broad and strong in his shirt and trousers,

lifting her into an oblivion of restfulness—of Madame Jouin's wise fingers—then no more.

The next morning she was quite well again. But her fainting had frightened Craige and he began to treat her with a new tenderness that endeared him to her the more.

He was one of those men of an abiding affection and kindness, absolutely without imagination; faithful and self-sacrificing, he could never understand why anyone else did not like what he liked or wanted something he did not want. The desires he comprehended he gratified gladly; those he did not he was oblivious of.

One thing in Barbara he was disappointed in. After the seclusion of her girlhood her gay nature wanted some life more bohemian—more free—than the formal existence of respectable amusement, which he considered the only possible one because the only one proper. She wanted to see all sorts of things, all sorts of restaurants and resorts; to go

to little German beer gardens, and Italian concerts; to eat frog's legs in French cafés, and press through the lounging crowds at night; to know all sorts of people; to learn a little of studio teas; to find out how successful writers worked; to talk with poets.

But his mental radius was horizoned by self-aware respectability—a respectability whose definition was the opinion of the majority; wholly commonplace, he adored the commonplace; the popular was to him the proper; the universal, the undeniable. He had tendernes, energy, patience, acuteness, honour, politeness, self-control, fidelity, sense—all the virtues of heart and will, lacking only those of intellect. Inevitably a man who would succeed, he was, as inevitably, a man who would be respected,—and who would never be great.

In January the Reverend Tappan began to fail. He sunk rapidly, his dearly beloved old books about him to the last, and one afternoon, when Barbara spoke to him as he sat pillowed up in his reading chair, he did not answer. It was the

first time he had ever failed in a detail of courtesy, even to his own daughter. She crossed, swiftly over to him and stooped, one hand on his shoulder. His volume of Tacitus slipped from his lap to the floor and his hands made no movement to retain it. Then she knew that he was dead.

After the funeral they came back again to their apartment on Lexington Avenue, Barbara with a new sense of loneliness.

She was naturally not very well now, and Miss Walsingham came on to spend a few weeks with her.

The old lady liked Craige, and he returned her liking with a good-natured tolerance for her masculine ways, in spite of the fact that he was rather shocked by her new-woman freedom of speech.

"He has character," she said on the first evening, after he had gone to read in the study, in order to leave the two women alone. "He has character; but not intellect. Now that Satterlee, who called this afternoon, he seems to have more intellect, because he has less character. I don't like him. He turns one eye at a

time. Now, women may be cowardly and gossiping and mean and selfish and discourteous, and always vain, and usually silly, but the male coquette——!"

"But are women all that!" cried Barbara, in a rapture of enjoyment over the old lady's excitement. "Aren't there any nobilities in the world?"

"In a man!" she returned, instantly. "Women are good enough in their way, and men are better, especially morally, considering their opportunities; but a man-woman, or a woman-man——!"

"But he's not effeminate," cried Barbara.

"Did I say he was?"

"Then, what——?"

"Oh, Lord!" the old lady exclaimed. "You did need me to come and take you away from Craige, didn't you! Don't think—feel! Look here, now, has he been out with any women yet?"

"Who?" questioned Barbara, wide-eyed.

"Craige."

"Why, how could he?" began Barbara, with a start.

"Ta, ta! The first year of marriage is

always the hardest—one becomes used to it, later. It's fortunate he's domestic—it's fortunate most men are silly enough to like the vanity of offspring just because they are theirs. All respectability is founded on vanity or inanity; and the home is the most respectable thing on earth. I like the alliteration!"

"But what if most men weren't domestic?" asked Barbara.

"Ta, ta! Do you think a man who wasn't would stand what he gets in his home if it were another man's? And, after all, isn't he an ass to stand domesticity anyhow? Hard work, uncomprehending accidents—(that's children)—less freedom, a wife who takes it all as a matter of course, and your money going out through somebody else's hands instead of your own—that's domesticity! Marriage is made for women, not men. The only trouble is we have to learn some things by experience—even the wisest of us!"

"What would you do then?" asked Barbara.

"You can't talk to an Anglo-Saxon,—an Englishman or the slightly freer son, the American,—without implying the racial trait of right and wrong. The French have only good and bad—you see, we've added morality, like apple-sauce to pork-chops. You're not shocked? Personally, I see well enough that marriage is an artificial relation!"

"You would have liked Autran," said Barbara, reminiscently.

The old lady looked at her with a new expression, half a sneer.

"Yes," she said, and was silent.

In April there came a letter from May.

"Have you heard the dreadful news?" she wrote. "Bess Marguerite's father is home. He left her in Paris with one of those terrible French women, a countess, and she has run away with a French artist. He is rich. It only took her three months. I naturally do not expect to hear from her again. It is a great shock to her people. I see now why she never talked about them; they were too good for her. Did you know that after you

left she just made her father take her away? I am more grieved than I can say, though hardly surprised. And to think that she resided in our midst! I almost forgot to tell you the worst—he is married, but living apart from his wife! She is a scarlet woman!”

Barbara wrote at once to Paris and received this reply:

“You ask if I have seen Autran. When I first came to Paris last autumn I saw him often. He is just the same. After a time I nearly ceased to see him. He is a great favorite here and would not miss me.

“As for Caesar, I care for him, and in a mood—we women have so many moods, my dear!—I went to him. It was very simple. He loves me; he cannot marry me; there is only that lacking. He is rich, young, clever, artistic, fashionable, bohemian, ambitious and indolent. (You see I have no reverence for anything.) And he has been unhappy, so sorrow has opened the eyes of his sympathy.

“Ah, la, la! What does it all matter—

this life! I have become selfish, but I hope not self-seeking. You have kept the sweetness of your nature, dear. If you saw me now would I disappoint you? I think you would be very sorry for me.

"Me, I am enjoying this life hugely. Paris is a constant delight to me. All that was sleeping in me is wakening. I have lived for years in these six months. Think I will write the epic tragedy of the commonplace—'A Tragedy of the Suburbs'—for there are not only the suburbs of cities, but the suburbs of the world, the suburbs of life, and most women live in them—it is the life of a woman

"Truly, Barbara, I haven't changed—underneath! The memory of the old, glad, foolish days when you were my only consolation for the cold piety of my home, comes to me with a terrible sweetness. You remember the poet Autran used to read to us—you remember that line, 'Alas, time stays, we go'? It seems to me that there must come times in life when change—just change, however much it may have been for the better—is the

saddest thing in all the world. That is nonsense. I will stop philosophizing.

"I have heard that May the Good has carefully collected every story about me she can get hold of and is embarked on a crusade of unsurprised pity. Such virtue does much to console a sinner of his repentance."

For the first time Barbara hid something from Craige. She knew he would not comprehend Bess Marguerite's letter, but she showed it to madame when the old lady came in May.

Madame read it slowly, her gold-rimmed eyeglasses perched on the top of her high nose. She put it down and looked at Barbara.

"Well, of all the——" she began, and stopped.

"Do you think she is very awful?" said Barbara.

The old lady grunted.

"You!" she exclaimed. "Child, don't you see? Don't you see, that she—while he——"

"What?"

"The poor child!" madame sniffed suddenly. "I—I—I—the poor child!"

"Do you feel it, too?" whispered Barbara, nestling to her. "I am sure she is unhappy; she is so gay! You remember what Autran said at my wedding supper—that the greatest of braveries was to be debonaire?"

The old lady glanced down on her for a moment with an expression that was almost a sneer. Then it softened, and a momentary look stole into her face—a look of infinite pity.

"In the Suburbs!" she whispered to herself.

The look passed; disdain returned to the throne the heart had usurped for an instant.

"Ta, tal" she cried. "She writes a good letter."

For the summer, Craige took Barbara up into the Catskills; she wanted to be quiet; she was expecting her first child in the autumn. Madame had promised to be with her at the time.

He got her a little dog-cart, and they

spent their time driving about the country roads, drinking milk at the farmer's houses and exploring the shady corridors of unused lumber tracks. Craige went to the city twice a week, but, except for these times, they were always together. He treated her with a tenderness that made him very dear to her, and she began to realise the rest her imaginative nature found in his placid reliability.

They returned to their apartment on Lexington Avenue and madame arrived, and in November a little girl was born, with no pain or danger. Only, for a few days, there was a scent of chloroform about the house, and from the cradle by the nurse's side in the study came the faint wail of the child.

One evening three weeks later Barbara was sitting alone by the fire in the drawing-room. She had on a pink silk tea-gown, with a rose in her hair. Craige was dining at his club with some business people and Miss Walsingham had not yet arrived from her hotel for her good-night visit.

The bell rang, and a moment after Satterlee entered.

They talked in the firelight amicably. He had always interested her with epigrams, and affectations of sentimentality, and he had a sense of gossip and an indolent appreciation of the incongruities of society, fostered by his easy life; he was the representative of a great Pennsylvania iron works and had little to do.

It grew darker in the light of the dying fire and they gradually became silent.

After a time Barbara turned uneasily and met his gaze fixed upon her from where he sat in the shadows, his face shaded by one hand.

"Shall I light the lamp?" he said.

"No," she replied.

"You are looking well to-night," he said, at last, with his usual ironic pretense of criticalness—a pretense that did not veil the admiration of his tone underneath.

She laughed.

"And I'm getting awfully old, too," she replied, "twenty!"

Again there was a long silence.

He rose softly from his chair and came over to her.

"Give me the rose in your hair," he said in a low voice.

"Surely!" she laughed, unfastening it.

She held it out to him, and met his gaze.

The rose dropped slowly from her fingers to the floor between them, and she remained leaning over the great arm of the chair gazing wide-eyed at the door long after he had tiptoed out.

CHAPTER X

BACK

"Why, child," cried Miss Walsingham, coming in half an hour later, "all alone here in the dark?"

"Yes," said Barbara.

The old lady stooped and picked up the rose and started to fix it in the girl's hair, where she knew she liked to wear it.

Barbara caught her hand.

"Don't!" she cried, and flung the rose on the fire with a passionate gesture.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed madame in amazement.

"Nothing," replied Barbara. "It is withered."

In the reaction from his care, after the birth of the child, Craige threw himself into business to make up for lost time, devoting his spare hours exclusively to the home and the infant. He had been

with Barbara so constantly lately that his man-nature demanded a change, and the paternalism of the unintellectual spirit rose in him to the usual exaggerated heights. In the unconscious egotism of parenthood he forgot his companion's need of love, treating her as the matter of course, and the child as the event.

Barbara was not unmaternal, but sensible; and in this Craige's usual sense failed him, and with it, his dignity. He used to make her ashamed of his antics with the child when their friends called, and she saw the mingled amusement and fatigue that his constant talk of it caused them and realised why they came less frequently.

As the winter passed, it actually became difficult for her to be with her husband alone. Either he wanted the baby with him or took up an attitude of tacit disapproval if she preferred to be without it. She began to realise how exclusive a love she had given him.

His matter-of-courseness towards her was such a contrast to his tenderness

before the child came that her girl's heart ached for comprehension in its loneliness, and after ceasing to wonder whether he cared the most for her or his offspring, she began to question if he had ever really loved her at all or had merely had a temporary passion for her. He never neglected her; but there was no more gallantry.

She had nobody to confide in; Autran and Bess Marguerite were gone, her father was dead; madame was in Boston; she had only distant and unknown relations, and only acquaintances, not friends. She might have asked Satterlee's advice, but lately she had conceived a strange dread of him—a dread which clung to her, however many times reason would cast it forth.

She was alone.

She wondered if she had been remiss in any way; if she had in any way failed in her duty. She remembered what Miss Walsingham had said to her one day—"ethically and literally there is no such thing as sexual morality or immorality—

only expediently and socially, which is artificially, but it is well that women should be virtuous as a matter of course, however silly it seems to the metaphysician, and certainly it's little enough when a wife gives to her husband only fidelity!"

Barbara, seeking in her heart for excuses for the man she loved, pitifully tried to belittle this matter-of-course fidelity, accusing herself of pique, of lack of tenderness, of want of interest in his business. Surely it could not be that he was tired now, after only a year and a half, when the real fulfilment of their dreams was only about to begin.

She began to ask him about his affairs, questioning him about sales and purchases.

The result, with a man of his regularity of emotion, was inevitable—his home was his rest to him, and it disturbed him to have his business intrude on his peace. She saw this and desisted, and that same mental regularity of his thought her erratic. He was too commonplace to not miscomprehend all natures less ordinary.

"Madame does not laugh any more!" said the good Madame Jouin one day as she dusted the parlour where the girl sat in the window seat. "Ees she not happy—what?"

"Madame," said Barbara, "tell me about your country. I have not heard of it for so long—so long!"

The French woman went off into ecstasies of description, in which her dusting was forgotten.

After Madame Jouin's comment, Barbara awoke to the realisation that she was almost drifting into the declining path of most married women, and letting herself become dull. She forced gayety. And the result was that Craige's inevitable lack of imagination accused her of heartlessness.

One evening he sat lounging in his chair before the fire. She ran to the piano, struck a few chords, and lifted her glad young voice in a popular song—

"Where you go, I go—
Out of the country of Sligo——"

"Barbara," he exclaimed, "have you no heart! You will wake the child!"

There came a faint wail from the nursery.

"You——" he began.

"Take care!" she said in a low voice, standing tense and white by the still vibrating instrument.

So they faced one another for a long minute.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I will go to her," she said, passing him.

So the battle was fought through all these weary months; by her with growing realisation; by him with wilfully intolerant blindness. Sometimes, brooding over this tragedy which seemed so to lack the elements of the tragical, a sense of exaggeration would strike her, and there would come a quick, sudden laugh of ridicule that was half misery—gone as suddenly. What was the use of it all anyway? Nothing had happened. The lover had merely become the husband and father. She did not wonder that madame laughed at her!

Was it possible that there was a willing, universal tragedy in the world called marriage—a disillusion realised only by those who had the independence of view to perceive it, and hidden from that vast majority, who accept a copy of what their neighbours have, without the originality to choose? Was it possible that marriage was, in itself, a mistake for the intellectual and the imaginative, for the dreamer and thinker—a natural relation and a benefit only to that huge mass of the population which are never heard from save numerically as “public opinion”? Thoughts that would shake the whole social system began to become secretly natural to her.

She went back in her memory over the lists of the great names of the ages—the lists of the mighty few born out of wedlock, born of love, not habit; and of those who had shrugged off the world's respectability to satisfy the need of their great souls in some way that opposite experience had taught them. She realised what Autran had meant by

learning negatively. She was learning negatively.

A terrible bitterness came into her heart. She clung to her romance with despairing hands, loathe to let it slip down the worn declivity of marriage into oblivion.

It did not seem to her so much, what she wanted—only love and life—only what she herself would do her best to give! She did not wish fashion, or great wealth, or fame, or place, or show—only romance and ideals, strange cities, peoples, thoughts, change, love, labour, freedom, success. Was that not life—life at its highest and deepest and broadest—life at its best? She realised, too late, that it was a dream that would never be fulfilled. Craige was the world; in fighting him, she was fighting it.

Sometimes she was almost consoled of her disappointment in the pride of the strength that made her dream such splendid dreams in the commonness of her environment; sometimes she was ashamed of her weakness—both because it could

not fulfill them and could not cast them forth.

Sometimes she felt one in age with old Miss Walsingham; she grew to think of Bess Marguerite with a passionate envy. "Public opinion" began to be hated by her, hated with that hate which is conceived by the idealist for the accepted and false and unworthy.

She and Craige had their moments of happiness—moments when he forgot his disappointment in her and she set aside the sneer in her soul.

She understood Bess Marguerite's "selfishness" now, and felt behind her only in opportunity. A dull anger grew in her heart—the sombre rage of a passion slighted of its return, a desolate heart-break which only her emotions admitted—never her mind.

Her naturally realisationary intellect kept constantly showing to her the—from the majority's point of view—exaggeration of her emotion, and she hid a tragedy she dared not avow to fools under the placidity they forced upon her.

The break came on a night in March. From his first word she knew that it was coming.

He had taken her to dine at a French restaurant, aware of the trial before him, with a pity trying to soften it to her by some little pleasure.

He had given her a dinner of everything she liked—oysters, cream of oyster-crab, broiled fresh mushrooms, curried duck with truffles, French salad, bomb Alaska, coffee, and Suchard chocolate, with Rhine wine, champagne and liquors.

He had never lately flirted with her, at least not in an atmosphere of such luxury—he had never before so tried to fall in with her mood. But this night he evidently endeavoured to wholly enter into her gayety, a gayety intensified by its unexpectedness.

About them were the lights and the laughter, the plaintive echo of the foreign voices, the dulled murmur, the glance of glad eyes, the crowds, the life——

She leaned back in her chair, her eyes half-closed in the dream of ecstatic enjoy-

ment, nibbling her chocolate indolently, deliciously conscious of her languorous beauty in the reflection in the mirror towards which she was almost too shy to turn.

"I have bought a house," he said.

She finished her chocolate steadily, extended her hand, and took a sip of her liquor. A Frenchman at the next table called for more champagne. She watched him while the waiter uncorked the bottle with a throaty pop and poured the steaming foam into the two wide glasses; he touched his to that of his mistress, a graceful girl in red, her turned-up nose shaded in the candle light by her great black feather hat. The glasses met with a dulled ring, a shiver as of the tremuloso alto on violin strings, almost a vibration.

She watched it idly, sipping her liquor.

"Yes?" she said.

Suddenly it all seemed very common to her; she was not old enough to know how all phases commonise.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"In New Rockhill," he replied. "The

New Haven road, eighteen miles from town—twenty minutes ride——”

He stopped. The Frenchman had upset his champagne bottle and the froth was dripping over the floor to a chorus of laughter from the other tables.

“Let us go!” she said brusquely, rising, while the waiter sprang to help her with her fur coat.

He insisted on sending for a cab, and they rode home with hardly a word.

“Sit down,” she said in a voice of coldness he had never heard before. “I will light your cigar for you—shall I?”

She went over to the parlour mantle, took a match from the box, struck it, and carried it across to him with a steady hand.

For some reason he began to tremble with the sense of imminent catastrophe—to tremble as he had not trembled since his wedding night. Her quietness awed him; he wondered——

“Will you have another light?” she asked in the same voice.

His cigar had gone out.

He started, but she, after striking the second match, returned quietly to her chair, arranging her skirts gingerly about her.

He smoked in silence, minute after minute. The silence grew more and more tense.

A gradual exasperation grew in his heart, an exasperation which he felt to be just, and which her silence intensified. But he controled it with a snap of the jaws, and knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"Barbara!" he said in a hard voice.

"Yes?"

He got up.

"You're enough to madden a man! I have worked for you, thought for you, loved you, too, in every way I could——"

"Stop, Craige," she interrupted, grasping the piano behind her.

"I don't think there's anything left undone! I don't know what the woman I married wants! Truly, it seems to me, in all honour, that I have had done all I could, and I don't know——"

He bit the end off his cigar, ruined it, and flung it into the grate. His voice broke for a moment. He started to take her hand, then drew up very straight.

"I have been what I believe a good husband and father should be. I love my wife and child and will be faithful to them and work for them so long as I may live! I am a self-man——"

He stopped, his mouth half open, staring at her. Yet she had not moved.

"I——" he began again, and stopped.

Then he continued, the foolish trembling increasing.

"It is a beautiful house," he went on, "on the hill. Sputter's Hill, you know. Neighbourhood—eleven rooms—one hundred by two hundred and fifty, with hardwood. Oh, damn it, why don't you speak!"

In the pause, the lamp on the mantle spluttered out.

She crossed over and lit it, and returned to her place by the piano in the shadows.

"My husband," she began.

He turned himself towards her.

"I thank you for the good dinner you have given me to-night. I thank you for all your tenderness. I thank you for everything. Believe me, I love the child as much as you do."

She paused, both hands upon the black top of the piano behind her, not leaning but resting against it.

"I am sorry if I have disappointed you, but I have tried not to.

"We must speak, as man to woman, now!

"I love you with all my heart, but you have, it has seemed to me, grown apart from me lately.

"Do not think I am unmaternal. I'm not, dear, and I care for everything just as much as you do. But I cared for you first, and I care for you more than all!

"I have not loved other men. I have dreamed of you. I have believed that my dreams would come true some time. I cannot express myself like an older woman. I wanted so much; love and romance, and all that. I——"

She gripped the piano hard behind her,

"You see, I wanted so much! Don't think I'm bitter, or anything like that. But I went into marriage with you as through an open door—a door open into life—I wanted to get away, and relied on you to lead me out. I have always been in the suburbs—the suburbs of everything—and I wanted to get out. Pardon me, dear."

Craige walked to the door and shut it.

"Go on," he said, in a tone that was new to her.

It awoke the concealed heartbreak in her soul; she took a step forward to the mantle and leaned one hand on it. He still stood by the door. The repression of the months broke in her, and after one long stillness of mutual realisation, she turned upon him.

"I will!" she said, her voice gradually rising from a whisper to a new distinctness. "You have become tired of a woman who loved you. You have slighted her for her child. If she had loved you less exclusively she would not have cared. I came to you with all the hopes a girl

can have — more, maybe — and you give me—you give me the lot of every woman, a comfortable home, children, an ordinary tenderness, a sure future, an easy road. It is much. And I? I have given to you my body—that is nothing—but all my hopes and all my ideals; such hopes as you never felt. Is it too little, in the exchange of marriage? I have given all to you, and you have bought what you want, in so far as was in me to pay you. Which has the best of the bargain?"

Her voice fell.

"Now you are going to take me again into the suburbs," she murmured very low. "Into the suburbs—the suburbs—from whence I came!

"Don't you remember what I talked out to you on the night you asked me to be your wife? It may have been foolish!"

She stopped, then went on again.

"Once, while we were still on our honeymoon, you taunted me with the fact that you kept me. If I had been your kept woman you would have feared to

lose me. That is the hold of the mistress over the wife."

She stopped and laughed, in a low, weary note.

"You know what I wanted—success for you—real success, not the commonplace of the ordinary man—life—I wanted life!"

There was a long pause.

"Now you take me again into the suburbs."

After a long time Craige took a step towards her.

She raised herself from where she leaned on the mantle shelf, her head on her hands.

"It is for the child," he said in a low voice.

A log broke and fell from the andirons.

She went uncertainly towards a chair and seated herself.

"Thank you for the dinner," she murmured. "Go, please."

He hesitated a moment. Then his held-in rage overcame him.

"You damned——" he began, and stopped, shaking.

Then the torrent came again, all insults, including the name of Satterlee.

After a while he was through.

She had not moved.

"I will go with you," she murmured. "Go, please."

He waited a moment, then turned and left her, softly.

"Craig!" she cried, throwing herself on her knees in desperation. "Don't take me—don't—don't!"

She flung herself on the floor.

"Oh, my God!" she prayed, her whole lonely, hungry, girl's soul breaking within her in a passion of despairing sobs. "Oh, don't somebody know what it means to me! Somebody? Doesn't somebody know?"

CHAPTER XI

THE REBEGINNING

In answer to a perfectly toneless letter from Barbara, Miss Walsingham, divining a tragedy, arrived by the next train.

Barbara repeated the facts without comment.

"Is it so terrible to have to go to the country?" asked the old lady, curious to hear her reply.

The girl rose and walked to the window.

"Do you remember Bess Marguerite's letter?" she asked at last.

"Yes. Why? She's a great woman."

"I'm not a great woman," the girl replied. "With me it's heart and head, with her it's head and heart. I am simply passing through the tragedy of all who dreamed. I am meeting the truth face to face. You know what rustication means

to me—rustication without even the ‘love in a cottage’ element. I think I will never again flirt or dance. It all seems so silly, doesn’t it?”

“You will get away some time!” said madame, after a pause.

“Do you think so? My husband is a man of habit. He does not enjoy change; he is bored by society; respectability is easy, natural to him; he looks at the ‘home’ as a place of rest. He would not make me unhappy. He cannot comprehend.”

Her voice was monotonous.

“He is sorry for me and angry at me—pity and blame—not understanding. I am sorry; I am never to get what I hoped for when I married. Other women would be satisfied.”

“Does it mean the negation of everything to you?” asked the old lady. “You will become reconciled to it!”

“God forbid!” cried the girl.

“Why?”

“You have seen the women who have ‘become reconciled to it’—to the suburbs?”

I will at least remain a member of life and not degenerate into a provincial drab!"

"Children—," began madame.

"Is that enough for a woman like me?" asked Barbara. "I am not a bad mother, but I am something more than merely maternal. The whole tragedy is absurd—it is as she said, 'the life of a woman,' only there grows in it a terrible and furious pathos when it is applied to a woman who dreams. What suits the majority is easy to fools. When the majorities' measure is forced on a being who thinks, there is — Custom is fate's procrustean bed."

She crossed over to the mantle and pulled a few leaves from one of the roses with a slow, cold cruelty.

"I am becoming quite learned, you see!" she ended, sneering sadly at herself.

"I will speak to Craige!" said the old lady emphatically.

"Why?"

"I will make him see——"

Barbara shrugged her shoulders.

"Shall we have some tea?" she asked.

Three hours later he was closeted with the old lady in the drawing-room. Barbara had been sent away.

"Look here, Craige!" she began. "You're disappointing your wife."

His jaws set.

"The child's health demands it," he said.

"Bosh!" madame cried. "Aren't there any children in town? Do you know what you are disappointing her in? In you, I suppose, your disdain would suggest? Ta, ta! That's nothing! She would only love you the more! All affectionate-natured women are a little doggy and love a bad master—that's their instinct of helpfulness, my son! But you're disappointing her in something more important—in what she expected when she married you. You've got what you wanted—her body, an offspring, a home. That was what you wanted, wasn't it? Yes? Very well. Its what the majority of respectable husbands want. You've something in addition that most men don't get—she's

pretty, and she's popular, and she's clever—I needn't say she's virtuous."

The old lady crossed one leg over the other.

"Now," she resumed, "what's she got? You! Humph! A kid—(which is a thing no girl of twenty won't find a care!) A home—(which she had before!) A man to provide for her—(which she didn't need!) It's about what you couldn't help giving her, isn't it!

"Now what did she expect? In the first place, love. You know very well that your last word is for the child in the morning, and your first in the evening when you come home. Suppose she treated you that way? Ah, well, I don't believe you still care for her enough to even be jealous, so long as it's your child—yours!"

"Is it not natural with one's own child?" he interrupted.

"Natural? Is civilization natural? Cannibalism is more so! 'Natural?' Is a thing good because it's natural? Isn't bad as natural as good? Aren't hate, and revenge,

and lust, and selfishness, and infidelity, and animalness, and vanity—and *vanity*, sir!—as ‘natural’ as the Christian virtues, and ten times more so? ‘Natural!’ ”

She snorted.

He smiled with the superiority of the fool who has the stupidity of the masses behind him.

“Well, customary, then!” he suggested.

She looked at him.

“Am I talking to a man of intellect and observation?” she asked.

“Do you believe that the public at large is characterized by independence of judgment, by sense, by ability to chose, compare, and select, by intelligent comparison, by wisdom to accept and reject, to apply and eliminate, to perceive the sense and nonsense of things and decide luminously and irreverently without unconscious conformance to the custom of the majority, and apply their decision without cowardice or compromise, and in spite of the dictates of fools they dispise?”

“I do!” he answered, with a certain air of final conviction, of something almost

piety—a piety such as that wherewith he had said the same words at his marriage service.

There was a long pause.

“Let us go back,” she resumed, her voice trembling a little. “I have said, that, in the first place, you do not give her so much love as she had expected. You have, in your own eyes, justified yourself for transferring it to your child, because the child is yours. Yes? Very well.

“In the second place, she has dreamed all her life of foreign countries. You know very well that in the enthusiasm of courtship you led her to believe that you were working for the fulfillment of all these dreams. Have you fulfilled them? Have you any present intention of doing so? Truly, do you believe you ever especially care to? You are not troubled with such dreams.

“In the third place, (which is a thing any intellectual man would have seen as a matter of course, and which, of course, you comprehend), a clever woman would naturally marry with the idea of getting

out of the provincial environment which had surrounded your wife in the suburbs all her life. Marriage, to such a woman, would be an emancipation. She would be capable of making an intellectual man a great man. Destiny is a bow, and we are the arrows; and when the arrow has been held drawn back for a long time on the string, and when the finger of chance at last lets loose, the shaft goes far! By taking her back into the suburbs again you are virtually taking the arrow from the string and putting it back into the quiver. There are other hungers than those of the body; there is the hunger of the soul. You are feeding your wife's body, but you are going to starve her soul!

"Think twice! Don't take her out there! Don't cheat her, my friend! I am an old woman, and I am alone, and, believe me, I have cared for men in my time—(you would not think so, would you?)—and now I love you and Barbara like my children, and want to help you to get what you have both hoped for.

"I know she is imaginative, and a good deal of an idealist. I know she is a dreamer, but, my friend, don't cheat her of her dream!

"Take a good resolution. Take her to Europe. I will look after the child. She would be so happy; you would make her love you in quite a new way.

"Come, now! Accept what the gods have given you! Come, my friend, don't take her out there!"

She sank back in her chair. She had not been so earnest in her intensity for years.

Craige got up and began to walk up and down.

"I am very much obliged to you for counselling me, my friend," he began. "Believe me I have followed your arguments with entire appreciation. But——"

He paused a moment, standing on the hearth rug, his hands clasped behind him, frowning.

"I find Barbara very emotional, in fact hardly practical. She is changeable. I believe it to be for the best that she

should have more exclusive control of the child, and I believe the pure air of the country to be more beneficial to the latter. That seems to be the question in hand, the rest may, I think, go over to another time."

He straightened himself.

"Believe me, I greatly value your advice. I will send Barbara to you."

He turned and went out.

* * * * *

They moved out to New Rockhill on the first of April. Craige had furnished the house luxuriously, and opened accounts with the butcher and grocer, and with bakery and ice man, the milk man, and the cook was there to receive them.

They alighted at the brown wooden depot, and after arranging with the baggage-master about their trunks, made their way across the muddy clay road to where the horse-car stood by the board fence. The nurse carried the baby. It was eleven o'clock in the morning and they were the only passengers.

On the station platform a group of village loafers had eyed them with sullen viciousness, spitting negligently into the guttered slope of the ungrassed terrace, and now the shabby conductor gave them the same curious examination, the driver turning round to gaze at them likewise. Aside from this provincial curiosity into their affairs of those who had no special affairs of their own, the station seemed deserted. At the end of the short slope, where the road turned past the little wooden church, a dog meandered away slowly, his white hair dirty with mud of the streets; from the corner saloon came the faint echo of men's coarse voices; from somewhere in the huddle of houses behind the candy store at the crossing a child's wail rose, garrulous and persistent.

It had been raining, but now the sun was struggling to force its way through the dim clouds, and the spring vapour hung reeking on the picket-fenced saplings and glistened on the rusted iron ornamentation round the roof of the saloon.

The driver, being tired of his scrutiny,

turned, pulled out a silver watch, glanced at it, and grunted to his horses, and the old car jolted off, the bells jangling dismally.

They went past vacant lots with dilapidated signs, and little corner groceries where barrels of potatoes stood sheltered from the wet under sagging awnings. From the windows gaudy and well-known picture advertisements greeted them with the pathos of the out-of-place.

The car jerked on a turn, descended between rows of clapboarded houses, turned again, and began to drag up the long hill.

All was utterly desolate, wet, and dispiriting.

At last the few new cheap villas come in sight on the top of the hill, their lawns just sprouting the grass of spring in front, behind—it was Monday—the washing hanging disconsolately between poles on the curving iron wires.

"This is your place, ain't it?" said the conductor, as the driver pulled up his horses at the entrance to a newly blue-

stoned drive with a few cottages on either side.

They got out, the men staring at them dully, and went up the board walk to the steps of a Queen Anne villa painted yellow and white.

"All this will improve amazingly," exclaimed Craige, sweeping his hand around with a patronising gesture. "We are convenient to the cars, and only seven minutes to the station; the neighbourhood is select; and there are thirty trains a day. Mr. Vessell, a man I have known for some years, lives near here. He has fine greenhouses. His wife will call on you. Then there is Mrs. Kopp a few hundred yards further on, around the corner, and the Holes further up the street, and the news agent at the station told me that a new family by the name of Wallemar is going to move into the neighbourhood; they have been living in Pelham and have found the air unhealthy. You will have lots of society."

He was quite jubilant, the first time she had seen him so for several weeks.

"Do you see the shrubs I have planted?" he exclaimed. "They bloom in May, though we can hardly hope that they will recover from the shock of transplanting until next year. The name of this avenue is Waverley Place; there beyond, the street where the cars run, you know, is Clay Avenue, the Sardinghams live over there; and behind them—you can't see the house, it is behind those trees—the Kopp's, the old people. Shall we go in?"

They passed up the blue-stone path across the little lawn. The cook met them at the door.

They had beefsteak and fried potatoes and coffee for lunch in the midst of their unpacking, and macaroni soup and roast beef for dinner, their trunks arriving in the evening.

Barbara was very quiet, saying hardly anything except to appreciate the kindness of the arrangements made for her comfort.

In three days the first neighbour called—Mrs. Hole.

She drove up at five o'clock in the

afternoon, her carriage wheels crunching over the unrolled blue-stone, and Barbara came to meet her in the parlour, having first given instructions to Maggy, the maid and nurse, to bring in the tea.

"My dear!" cried the old lady vivaciously, taking both her hands, "am I the first one? The first of the neighbours? I always make it a point to welcome the newcomers, you know. And do you like it? Of course, it must seem a little out of the way at first. Doesn't it? But then we will all help you to make acquaintance. There is Mrs. Kopp, and the elder Mrs. Kopp, and the Vessells, and——"

Her voice went on in ecstatic monotony.

"Tea!" she exclaimed, as the maid came in bearing the tray. "It is so good of you! But really the hospitality is charming upon 'the Hill,'—we call it the Hill, you know. We hardly associate with the town people; they are—what shall I say—well, at any rate, we don't. I see you understand. And such a delicious house

you have, too! Really I quite envy you! How horrid the roads are; the town should really keep them in repair. But you know what the town councils are! Really you should induce Mr. Craige to—as a newcomer—exert his influence in the right direction.”

Barbara looked at her curiously. She was a stout, blond woman of about fifty-five, looking older because of the antique frivolity she affected—a pitiful frivolity, its coquetry hopelessly faded out by years of provinciality. She had on a brocade dress with a cream lace front, cut in the fashion of three years before, expensive and obsolete. Her fine furs, though it was too late for furs, were thrown negligently over one shoulder, and she wore her Easter hat.

She departed at last. Ten minutes later the second visitor arrived—Mrs. Kopp.

She was a tall, hatchet-faced woman, dressed in a gray silk shirt waist and a bicycle skirt.

“How do you do?” she said in a pas-

sionless voice, with an unconscious air of acrimony. "I see Mrs. Hole has been here—recognised her carriage tracks. I hope you will like New Rockhill."

She stopped, set her lips, and looked intellectual, waiting for Barbara to speak.

"I trust so," said the girl simply. "Everybody seems very hospitable."

The lady rose.

"I will send you an invitation to the next meeting of the Shakespeare Club," she said in her passionless way. "We have a circle; I read; it will meet at the house of Mrs. Von Sutphen on the Sound Road. You play whist, of course?"

"Indifferently well," replied Barbara.

"Ah!"

She went out with a cold good-bye from the threshold; through the curtains Barbara watched her as she tramped down the board walk her plain black Fedora bobbing over the shrubs.

In ten minutes the bell rang again.

Mrs. Vessel, a wrinkled little woman with the air of an old maid—she had mar-

ried late in life and had never recovered from the habit of spinsterhood—hurried in with prim eagerness.

"My dear," she chirped in her faded old voice, "I've come to see you and the baby!"

Barbara poured tea and listened to the clogged flow of the thinnest of rivulets of suburban small talk.

"You and Mr. Craige really must come over and see Boyd's crocuses!" she piped. "I will get him to ask you. Every afternoon when Boyd—that's my husband—comes home, why, he puts on a pair of overalls—isn't it nice of him?—so modest!"

"Yes," said Barbara, turning her face away from the light.

"Yes; isn't it? He's so stout, too; if he didn't, he'd be quite—oh, with his nature, he couldn't do anything else, you see."

She paused.

The girl did not reply. As she set down her teacup it rattled on the saucer.

"I really believe he would split them when he stooped over!" The old lady

ended with a quavering giggle. "He's so good and careful, you know. Why, you'd never believe——"

The silly red poppies bobbed on her hat, flaunting over the respectability of the steel and jet ornaments. The girl appreciated the combination as a new specimen of the typical.

"And now, my dear," cried the old lady ecstatically, "where is the baby?"

Barbara had it brought down, and entered, trying to repress her laughter, into an exposition of the small creature's wonders. It was a brown-eyed girl with less than usual of the infantile stare and a laugh its mother loved. Mrs. Vessell sat in rapture.

At last, after the child returned to the nursery, she rose to go.

"I have enjoyed this little visit so much," she cooed in her weak voice. "I hope you will come to see me, my dear. You—you are so—so different from the other young girls I know—yes. They are quite, quite—— And do bring your sewing—and the baby!"

She was gone.

It was nearly dark. The girl crossed over to the fire and seated herself in a great chair, leaning forward, with her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands, gazing into the glowing flames, their ruddy lights and shadows dancing across her face in the obscurity.

Behind her, to the right, the pile of tea things made a pallid square on the tea-table in the gloom.

She thought of the three provincial ladies—Mrs. Hole, in her brocade lace, the Grande Dame of the Hill; Mrs. Kopp, the “intellectual” person of the “circle,” trying to be the New Woman; Mrs. Vessell, the superannuated, married old maid, prim and dull and kindly and childless.

She thought of the Grande Dame’s attempt to retain the coquetry of youth, yet, at the same time, reveal her tyrannical magnificence; somehow she liked her the best. She had a certain shrewdness in her eyes, and the others were too wilted for lack of the sun of life, too faded by too

many washings-out of the soul's enthusiasms.

She thought of Mrs. Kopp's Shakespeare Club and whist. She wondered what she would say if she knew that Barbara read the comic papers and hated cards. The poor woman had seemed to disapprove of her—perhaps that was her only manner—aside from her indifference. She thought of the gray silk shirt waist with a shudder; she wondered if Mr. Kopp were a stupid or a fast man; he must be one or the other! It is so little use, she reflected, for a man to try to reform his wife's respectability—her mouth curved in repressed whimsicality.

She thought of Mrs. Vessell, the married old maid. "Come and bring your sewing and the baby!" If she knew that she read Zola in French and hated the country—and then that hat—!

Suddenly, there alone in the darkness, Barbara burst into a peal of laughter. She laughed, and laughed, and laughed, till she leaned back in her great chair at last utterly tired out.

The maid came in and took away the tea things, looking at her mistress in awe out of her little pig's eyes. The maid she had brought had given one look at the "loneliness" and left. Barbara had found this one in the village; the girl was not used to a sense of humour in her mistresses.

The door clicked; Barbara heard a step. "Craige!" she cried, running to the door, her cheeks flushed in the fire light from her mirth of a minute before. "Come in here! I want to speak to you!"

"Craige," she cried, "oh, Craige! I have been a bad naughty girl! I thought it was all tragedy. But the tragedy is such a comedy! I——"

She threw herself into the great chair again and laughed and laughed.

He strode out angrily and slammed the door behind him, furious at another change he did not understand.

"Ask the maid!" she cried after him, delightedly.

At dinner that night his face was rather flushed and he glanced at her with an air

that was almost shame. Their mouths twitched.

Over the fish he looked at her. They both burst out into unrestrainable laughter.

He had asked the maid.

CHAPTER XII

TWENTY-ONE TO TWENTY-THREE

It was a false prophecy and the last flicker of gayety between her and Craige.

The spring came and passed.

She had tried to companion with these people, and the result of it was that she had drawn back into herself, to live in her library, giving her attention to her house duties with a sweet competence that to Craige seemed content and to Miss Walsingham passed for resignation.

Craige used to wonder sometimes during that summer and autumn if she were really content. A strange shadow had come to brood in her eyes; this girl of twenty-two, who looked seventeen, had, in her glance, the dreaminess of an older woman's realisation; a new pathos added itself to her slow and whimsical gayety; if she had not been beautiful the

very coquetry of her chivalrous and dreaming soul would have shone through her face and made her adorable and mysterious.

There was plaintiveness, not repression, in her face, the wisdom of tragedy, with a sense of humour—above all the gallantry of a soul unconquerably debonair—a debonairness saddened till it was half patience and half desperation, and wholly loneliness.

A great silence had fallen over her spirit; fearful of pity from someone who might understand, she talked brilliantly, but never of her own depths, save in generalities.

To her husband she was perfectly satisfactory. She never troubled him but once—it was in the autumn.

"I would like to go abroad this winter," she said tentatively one evening, picking at the fringe of the chair in which she sat by the fire.

"Later, my dear!" he smiled. "You forget our expectance of our second child in the spring."

"My youth is going," she said at last very low.

He did not answer. On the mantelpiece the clock—one of the seven—ticked with a hollow distinctness.

She did not speak again.

The second child came in June—a boy. They named him John, after his father. The girl was named Dorothy, after Craige's mother.

Again the summer passed. The autumn came. Barbara was twenty-three. There was no change.

It rained that autumn, and the dripping wet rotted the brown leaves from the branches early in October, and all the day, as the chill breeze whispered winter through the trees, the withered flames of summer swirled softly to the ground, where the rain turned them sodden and shapeless.

Little Dorothy, with her mother, walked in the woods on sunny afternoons, treading silently over the shadow-striped carpet, the shrill, soft voice of the child breaking the stillness with joyous questions and comments.

There seemed to be an enchantment over Barbara, an enchantment that she trembled at.

The terror of a great misery, that was a great mystery, was stealing over her soul month by month, year by year. She wondered what she wanted—wondered with the sick wonder of an isolated and lonely woman aware of the impossibility of her hopes.

She thought, half idly, in the long reverie that had come over her, of using her own money — Autran's money — to get away. Where should she go? She had no cause. Craige was good to her—she could not leave the children. A certain sense of balance held her; she could not hurt three for one.

That winter, Craige, after looking at her in silence for a time one evening, threw his cigar into the fire.

"Barbara," he said, "I've abused you. Come away with me for a few days."

"I would be glad," she said, with an awakening look—a remnant of the old time. "Awfully glad!"

She laughed; the sadness of the laugh struck him like a blow.

"Barbara!" he cried.

"Yes, Craige?"

"Have you been unhappy?"

He had risen from his chair and his face was pale with a realisation that all the words or hints of all the years had never taught him.

She looked at him with a calm interest.

"No." She lied.

He walked to the mantelpiece and leaned his head upon it; then he came back to his chair.

"Where shall we go?" she asked, after a pause.

"Satterlee is with the Betheny Iron Works. He has invited me to go there," he answered. "We could stop over night at the Eagle Hotel, in Betheny. Will you go?"

"Shall I?"

The girl's voice was very low.

"Would you like to, dear?"

Craige had crossed over to her, and

now, standing beside her, he stooped and kissed her hair.

A half articulate cry started to her lips —(did he care for her again?)—but she forced it back, just putting her soft mouth against his hand, though he did not know it.

“Would you, Craige?”

That night as she lay awake while he slept she raised herself on one elbow and gazed at him, the starlight shining in her eyes.

“My God!” she whispered to herself. “Has it come back—the love?”

She watched him for a long time. She knew it was not true.

They got off the train at Betheny at five o'clock in the evening of a December dusk, under the icicle-fringed roof of the old wooden station. Satterlee met them—she had not seen him for some months, and in spite of his familiarity as an old family friend, he seemed strange to her. Though he had called frequently, in his eyes there lay, in the red glare of the station lamps, a new and sinister

mirth. The snow lay like a wolf's ruff of bristling ermine around his fur-covered shoulders as he bent over her hand, and the slow flakes of falling whiteness drifted between them and the coppery glow on the horizon where the iron works blew and flared.

"I will call for you by eleven o'clock to-night," he said, "when the night shift comes on. We will meet the superintendent at the works. There will be a great casting."

Craige and Barbara drove to the Eagle Hotel across the river, in the old town on a main street. The works, etc., formed a suburb. They dined in the dismal dining-room at one of the long tables that seated thirty, and afterwards Craige, on his way to the cigar store, half a block up the street on the other side, slipped on the ice-coated brick pavement and was supported into the hotel by a couple of strangers.

"I will not have my wife's excursion spoiled," he gasped to the proprietor. "Tell her I've sprained my leg, that's all."

The doctor bandaged it. He had not hurt himself more than the wrenching of a knee, laming him for a day or so.

Barbara did not wish to leave him. Only his anger at her sentimentality made her go down to dinner alone. When Satterlee arrived at eleven, Craige ordered her to go with him, and, oblivious of her mute protest, sat upon the couch and watched them depart, swearing faintly as he rubbed his bandaged knee.

"Get her along, Satterlee," he cried jovially. "But be sure you get her home by three! I want her to not miss her trip, and see the great casting. Down to-morrow! Damn——"

Satterlee shut the door.

"Your wrap?" he said.

"Ah, pardon me!"

She opened the next door, took a fur coat from the bed and went down the stairs.

They climbed into the creaking carriage that awaited them outside, its unlighted lamps reflecting the glow from

the hotel bar with a prismatic purple as their bevels caught the gleam.

On either side of the road the shoveled snow from the deserted pavements lay in shadowy parapets under the clear, cold light of the stars. The town was asleep; only over the horizon of black houses a glow as of some great conflagration lit the sky. It was not until the slow wagon had crunched its way down the winding streets, over the covered bridge by which they had come at twilight, that she first heard the dull reverberation of the pounding of the works.

They crossed the railroad tracks, turned down a dark street, got out and groped their way down a black alley, their feet, in their heavy shoes, squashing into the mud-churned snow. They could see nothing; but steadily the pound, pound, pound of the great hammers grew louder, and a buzzing whir began to stir in the air. The dirty alley grew brighter.

"This way," said Satterlee.

They turned a corner.

A roar smote on her ears; across the

blackened snow a hedge of yellow spears shot out from under a huge door. Satterlee hit the panel. The portal swung open on pandemonium, on whose threshold stood a fur-coated gentleman with a cigarette.

Satterlee yelled at him unheard in the gigantic diapason of discord. He bowed to Barbara. She saw his lips move. They went in.

Under a vast roof, so far above their heads that it was hardly visible in the swiftly wavering glare, hung cranes and steel arms of tons in weight, supporting swinging chains like anchor chains and huge steel buckets shaped like scuttles. From the clay floor other gigantic and mysterious shapes soared up towards them, and between these, hidden in iridescent clouds of steam, lay the moulds. From away down towards the other end of the place came the enormous pound, pound, pound of the great hammer. She could just see the steel erection that supported it towering above a mass of hanging machinery at its base. The lights and

shadows alternated so rapidly, as the swinging buckets poured their contents of milk-white molten steel into the moulds below, that the vast forms seemed to waver and change like monstrous spectres as the glare was suddenly drowned in darkness and the darkness riven by light.

Brawny men in leather aprons ran swiftly, pointing and gesticulating, or swung, fifty together, on the handles of great pokers hung from the roof, pushing them forward into the open mouths of furnaces, changing the dully-glowing disks, in the smoke, into infernos of blood-red coals.

There was a shriek as a little engine ran whistling on curving tracks, drawing a dozen coal cars from furnace to furnace.

They made their way over the debris of the clay path, past barrels of dirty water in which men plunged their sweating arms and heads, on to the great hammer.

By the side of the double steel towers, between which the ponderous weight ran up and down in silent grooves, dripping

with oil, sat an old man on a camp-stool, his hand on a little wheel, controlling the gigantic force with a finger.

He was eating bread and hard-boiled eggs.

He grinned, leaned forward, placed one of the eggs on the steel base that acted as an anvil, a base as broad as Barbara's dinner table, and turned the wheel slowly.

The mass of metal came down noiselessly, touched the egg, and rose again.

He put his hands to his mouth and yelled to Barbara:

"It breaks 'em for me!"

The engine came shrieking up, drawing a steel flat car on which glowed a piece of iron the size of a trunk. Fifty-foot pincers, manned by a hundred men, seized it, bundled it onto the anvil—there were three blows, each of which shook the ground like an earthquake—and the square of iron lay, sombrely turning from red to gray, no thicker than a dictionary.

They went on and stopped before a contrivance that irresistibly reminded Barbara of her clothes-wringer.

"This is where we roll the steel plates for the battleships," the superintendent shouted in a lull.

The great pincers pushed forward a nearly white-hot iron plate the size of a room, and a foot thick. It passed back and forth between the rollers, and grew to the thinness of a good beefsteak, and to its dark red colour.

From the other side of the roller, that rose twenty feet above their heads, broke out a hideous screeching that sent Barbara's hands to her ears in an instant.

"Sawing off the rough edges," yelled the superintendent, when he had guided her some distance away.

It was time for the great casting.

They took their places on a heap of rubbish behind a wall of leather-aproned men. The superintendent fastened one of the garments about the girl. It reached from her feet to her arm-pits, with a flap covering her breast.

"Your dress!" yelled the superintendent, apologetically.

He handed her a clumsy pair of blue spectacles, he and Satterlee assuming some likewise. The three turned and laughed at each other.

In front of them, to the right and left, mysterious machines rose a hundred feet into the darkness. Overhead a dozen tiny figures of men flitted about, like bats, along an aerial gallery.

Now there was a movement among the machines; they separated; great cranes dropped and disappeared; they rose. High above all an enormous arm of iron, an arm of many parts, bound in many chains and cables, bore, swinging from its end, a square bucket as big as a closed carriage. Over its edge jerked flakes of liquid steel the colour of buttermilk.

It swung to the middle of the open space and stopped. There was a movement of chains and pulleys, the bucket tipped, and a white stream as thick as a man's body poured out of the spout as easily as a servant pours water from a pitcher.

Barbara saw it all through a blue light.

She realised why they had made her put on the glasses.

For nearly a minute the pour kept on—a seemingly motionless pillar of metal reaching from the bucket to some place which she could not see. The bucket righted itself with a swing, a few white drops flew from the dripping spout, the men tumbled back hastily and dispersed with grins. The casting was over.

“Fifteen tons!” yelled the superintendent. “The jacket of a gun to shoot seven miles!”

When Barbara and Satterlee came out into the darkness again, and the huge door shut behind them, turning the clanging roar, softly, suddenly, to a throbbing murmur, it seemed to her that the night had a wonderful stillness, the stars an unutterable divinity.

They groped their way up the alley in silence.

“Let us walk back to the hotel,” said Barbara when they reached the street. “I don’t want to drive, I want the air, and the night.”

They made their way past the deserted station and across the old covered wooden bridge. As they picked their steps along the snow-covered pavement after crossing the canal, Barbara slipped. Satterlee caught her, and thereafter held her arm tightly in his.

"Barbara," he said after a long silence.

"What?" she replied, a little startled at the first name.

"Do you know I am going away?"

"Why, no!" she exclaimed in surprise. "Where?"

"My company is sending me abroad. I shall stay there."

There was a pause. For some reason, they had come to a stop on the slope of the hill, just below the hotel; the slight wind had fallen; the only light was from the millions of stars overhead.

The pandemonium of an hour ago echoed dully in the girl's brain; the contrast to the stillness awed her; it suddenly all seemed unnatural to her. Yet, as she stood waiting for Satterlee's next words, she shivered. It was not the cold.

"I shall stay there," he repeated. "If I must—alone. Are you happy?"

She struggled to gather her senses about her, to cast off the terrible lethargy of this mood that the contrast had thrown upon her. Suddenly she realised that she was horribly, unutterably tired—tired of disappointment, tired of waiting, tired of loneliness and dullness and monotony and commonplace, and the weary, useless, hopeless days—tired of it all, tired out—infinitely sick and weary. She heard his voice, speaking.

"Ah, I know you are not!" he went on. "I have seen how alone you are in your isolation, how bravely you bear it. He takes you as a matter of course. Your love must have died long ago. You must know now that you care less for him than you thought. You have yet to live your romance!"

He stopped. The night was utterly still; there was not a sound in the sleeping town. It was after midnight.

He went on in the same low voice.

"You remember that twilight, three

years ago, when you half suspected? I loved you then. I have loved you ever since. Ah! I know I am a brute and a devil! Don't waste words in reproaches. I care nothing for that. Come with me!"

She turned towards the hotel.

"No!" he exclaimed. "Wait, and don't speak. I do not ask you to tell me now. I will be at the station to-morrow at eleven to see you off. If you will accept, wear a rose in your coat. I will send you some to-morrow morning. I sail in a week. Now, come on to the hotel."

He took her arm and resumed helping her over the snow. The night porter opened the door sleepily.

She turned to Satterlee where he stood on the steps

"Good-night," she said, "and thank you."

The roses came the next morning at eight o'clock. At ten minutes to eleven Craige got out of the carriage, helped Barbara, and limped across the station platform to where Satterlee stood waiting. Barbara's little chin was snuggled in her furs. There was no rose.

They bought the tickets and laid in a supply of newspapers and magazines.

The train pulled in, they clambered aboard and it started.

Satterlee stood white and still on the platform and watched it go.

"What a woman!" he whispered. "And not a word of reproach!"

He had to pay a farewell call.

Craige brought him out to dinner the night before he sailed.

"Wait here with Barbara," he said. "I want to go up to see the kids."

The room was cheerful with lights and the fire burned brightly.

"We have only a few minutes, Mr. Satterlee," said Barbara, "and I want to talk to you."

She had on a pink silk gown that left her pretty arms bare to the elbow, and showed a bit of round white throat. Her brown eyes looked at him honestly.

"You are a very foolish boy. How old are you?"

"Thirty-one," he said in a low voice.

She laughed.

"I am old enough to be your mother. Now, listen to me, my friend; if I had left my husband and children to go with you——"

She spread out her hands.

"But I love you," he whispered, saddened by her.

"Possibly."

"If you loved me, that would make a difference."

"Why?"

"Once more——"

"Why?" she asked again.

"But you have nothing in your life," he burst forth. "There is nothing but loneliness, unappreciated; nothing for a woman like you——"

"If I ran away would I not be running away?" she said, stopping him. "I have at least one thing—I would have that one thing less if I were a coward, however much I might have more—it is courage."

There was a long silence. He rose and stood before her, silent in admiration and respect.

She laughed again.

"Besides," she said, "I do not love you. (Here is my husband.) You are my very good friend. Respect women more!"

She extended her hand. He stooped to kiss it, but she took his in a strong, true grasp for a moment—a grasp of friendship and forgiveness—and dropped it.

"All, henceforth," he said in a low voice. She turned to her husband.

"Dinner is served," said the maid.

CHAPTER XIII

TWENTY-THREE TO TWENTY-FIVE

A year passed. Another child came—a boy. There was no change.

Another year passed. Barbara was twenty-five. There was no change.

Craige was making a good income. He had grown very regular in his habits and attended exclusively to his business.

The neighbourhood had been built up greatly; new streets had been opened and trees planted along the avenues. The horse cars were changed for electric cars, and there was a postal delivery; in the village were new and more city-like grocery stores; there was even a new railway station; otherwise everything was the same.

On the evening of her twenty-fifth birthday—it was autumn again—Barbara sat once more in her chair before the fire.

It was twilight, and Craige had not yet come home; the children, after their early supper, were safely tucked away in bed in the nursery.

He had given her a new set of furs on the anniversary and a cheque for a hundred dollars to spend on herself. Miss Walsingham, who was staying with her on a visit, had given her a splendid edition of Balzac; and from the neighbours she had received flowers and music and chocolates.

"I am a lucky girl," she murmured. "Surely—yes."

She was tired. She had been, all the afternoon at the "social club," a village society of ladies, in which she tried to take an interest. She was popular, though she remained much by herself. But this afternoon she had, perhaps on account of the gay gift-giving of the anniversary, been more talkative than usual, and had really made, she felt, quite a success, and she was tired.

"Aren't you going to dress for dinner?" called Miss Walsingham, down the stairs

from her own room—she had left the door open.

Barbara jumped up with an inspiration.

"Wait and see," she cried, gayly, running up the stairs.

She had resolved to make herself beautiful on this her birthday night. It was so long since she had put on a low-necked gown or fixed her hair. He would admire her. He would kiss her, and talk about her dress.

She shut her door, lit all the candles on the dressing-table and began.

It was half an hour after, that Miss Walsingham heard a crash in Barbara's room as though some small and heavy object had fallen.

"What is it, dear?" she cried.

There was no answer.

The old lady crossed the hall and opened the door.

"Child!" she cried, staring. "What is it?"

Barbara stood before the dressing-glass, her beautiful shoulders bare, her hair elaborately dressed on the top of her

head, at her feet her jewel box on the floor, its contents half fallen out on the carpet.

The girl stood perfectly still, gazing, her eyes wide open.

"What is it?"

The girl slowly raised one hand and pointed.

"See it," she whispered, "my reflection in the glass!"

"Hush, child! What is the matter?"

"I was leaning forward," replied the girl in the same awed whisper, "close—close—and suddenly I saw age coming around the eyes, at the corners of the mouth, between the brows. Oh——"

She stopped.

"I am growing old!" she screamed suddenly. "I am growing old in this place. My girlhood has gone! I—oh, God pity me!"

She threw herself into the old woman's arms with a wail.

"I am no longer pretty!" she whispered in a broken voice. "It is going—all going—away!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the old lady. "You're adorable, and younger than ever, but a fool. Get up. You're mussing yourself."

Barbara straightened herself with a sniffle, turning shamefacedly away.

"Do you think so?" she said in a small voice.

The old lady gave a snort of contempt.

"I'll be glad when Craige comes!" she exclaimed.

"Why?"

"Because I need some adult company!" retorted the old lady, from the threshold.

"Wait a minute."

She went back into her own room, wiped her eyes, blew her nose, seized a powder-puff and returned.

"There!" she exclaimed. "Now go on with your dressing while I powder myself."

Half an hour later they received a telegram from Craige saying he would not return until the ten o'clock train. They dined alone, madame talking vigorously to keep up the girl's spirits, and adjourned

afterwards to the library, where the old lady made her play cribbage till only courtesy kept the girl from throwing down the cards and bursting into tears.

Her white shoulders shone in the fire-light, her slim young neck rising from them in a perfect curve; her curly brown hair shadowed the deep, soft innocent eyes; there was a gleam of jewels—jewels no brighter than the light of her slow glance. Her gown was a pink brocade of an old-fashioned pattern, with tumbled lace as sleeves, the top outlined against her white skin by a border of gold brown fur, with fur around the edge, and fur intertwined with lace as shoulder-straps, *à la Russe*.

Madame, looking scarcely older than years before, save that her hair was now whiter than ever and that the strong lines from the corners of the nose were even a little stronger, looked at her with admiration. The old lady had been presented at the Czar's court when she was a girl, (when younger she had had relatives in diplomatic life), and she wondered what sensa-

tion this girl's innocent beauty would make in such a setting.

Craige arrived at half past ten.

Barbara ran to meet him in the hall.

"Why, little girl!" he exclaimed, looking at her with amused wonder. "All dressed up?"

"Yes," she answered, delightedly. "Am —am I not nice?"

She lowered her chin and gazed at him coquettishly from under raised brows.

"Charming!" he said. "Now see if you can find me some dinner. I've been awfully busy—that contract of Washington's, you know—beastly people, who are always hanging back, even when it is their own interest to go forward. Well—there, there! Now run along, my dear!"

"Craige," said the girl an hour later as he sat yawning in the library, preparatory to going to bed, "do you know that I'm getting old? Won't you take me next spring to see Bess Marguerite and Autran; he is quite an old man now, and I——"

"We'll see about it, my dear," he

answered. "Don't bother me about it now. I've got lots of important things to attend to. We won't discuss the subject any further. I'm tired."

"Yes, Craige," she said, quietly, after a moment.

The winter passed. She went to matinees occasionally in town, and made acquaintances with new neighbours. There was no change.

There was some shopping to do; the Shakespeare club, and the Social club to attend; there were calls to make; the children to look after; there was the house-keeping; then she read a good deal, wrote letters, and talked to Craige when he came home tired in the evenings; and in the spring there was the garden to attend to.

Madame visited her again this summer; they could not go away, the children were all too young.

"Can't you do something?" cried Barbara one evening, turning a hopeless face towards her.

"Courage, my dear — courage!" ex-

claimed the old lady. "What do you want me to do?"

"Take me away—anything!" cried the girl, passionately. "Ah! I have courage enough; it isn't that. But to sit here aside from the world and watch the years go by, and watch my youth depart, realising that I am doing nothing, that my life is wasted so far as its possibilities are concerned, that when at last I die all that I might have been will never have been—realising that all that I might have done will never have even been begun. Ah! what a hideous new torture has society manufactured for women who are not fools! I am tired of hearing that 'the place for women is the home,' 'the sphere of women is the home.' I admit it may be the only possibility for most women, but when one is—Tell me, madame, do you think I have been a bad wife, or mother, or house-keeper? I have been faithful and tender and obedient to my husband; none of my neighbours have more clever or loving or well cared for children; my house is better kept than

theirs, and my husband is never troubled with a word about it."

"You have a good head for everything," said Miss Walsingham.

"Why is it, then—why?"

"My dear," said the old lady, "you are a clever woman, and you have married a commonplace man."

"But what can I do, then, tell me; what can I do?" cried the girl. "My soul is in prison, and nobody will believe it!"

"And nobody will believe it," repeated the old lady. "It is the cry of the wise among the fools; it has been for all the ages, and will be forever. What a pity you did not have enough of the animal in you to content yourself with eating and drinking and the sordid pleasures of life! What can you do? Would you leave your husband, whom you love with your heart if not with your mind, would you leave your children, would you cast on them all the stigma of the run-away wife? Ah, my child, you have the family on your shoulders—the family—the burden respectability brings, the complicated web of

duties that binds each member, the burden on which the world is founded; and you, even though you are born for something higher than the common destiny, must bear your fate, my child, as best you may."

There was a long pause. The old lady seldom spoke so seriously.

Barbara's head sank on her arms where she leaned over the side of the great chair, and her shoulders shook with hopeless, soundless sobs.

During the days that followed she thought of her two old suitors, before Craige came. When last she had heard of them, through May, the dull and sentimental one was living in the same town, a country lawyer with a comfortable practice, a fat wife and five tow-headed children; the tragic one of many talents was playing the piano in a concert hall in Leadville, still doing nothing and complaining of "his luck" and dreaming the dreams of a failure.

She resolved to write to Autran.

She wrote him a carefully considered

letter, telling her whole situation, half humourously, and asking, not help, but counsel.

The answer arrived in three weeks.

"My dear child:—So you wish to fly! Alas, circumstance clips our wings, circumstance of work, or fortune, or family, or position, or love, or pity, or age.

"You see I am still the same. Not least in the fact that I am always and in everything, great and small, proud to be in your dear service. In fact, my child, I am quite your courtier to command—and you talk to me as a father!

"Now, seriously, what shall we do?

"I am an old bachelor, with some fifty thousand francs a year; sufficiently ancient to—in spite of my reputation—become your adopted parent without scandal. You could come to me. I can protect you quite effectually, I assure you.

"That is one thing.

"The second is, could you not have a talk with Craige, whom I liked, and induce him to bring you over here and let

me talk with him? Or, if you prefer it, I will come there.

"The third thing is, cannot you yourself put into your life what chance denied; can you not, out of the woof of dreams, weave a magic carpet on which you can fly away to fairy-land?

"I know this is small comfort, dear friend, but tell me, would you leave the things that bind you there? Would not the afterthought be more terrible and not less desolate than the loneliness you suffer now? You are too high a woman, my Barbara, to not be noble. Allow an old man who has lived the world as it came and kept, of all his illusions, only his honour, to stand bareheaded before you in a respect greater than he can express.

"My child, I have only two hopes now—your happiness, and that I may meet death with the laugh wherewith I have met his brother, life.

"Now what shall I do for you? You must just tell me straightly and let me do it. I leave the whole thing to you, relying upon both your kindness and your

wisdom. Will you come to me; shall I come to you; will it do any good for me to talk to Craige; will it do any good for you to talk to Craige; can you go on as you are, trying to make more out of yourself? From what you say I imagine Miss Walsingham is a clever woman. I see Bess Marguerite occasionally; she seems happy.

"Think and command.

"We have a proverb here, unlike most proverbs, not nonsense—'At forty a man is either a fool or his own doctor!' A woman should be her own physician at thirty, and remember that, even though nothing comes, all things pass. Life has taught me only two lessons—bravery and gayety; but then I was always so sad that I had to laugh to keed my spirits up! Try not to be unhappy when other people merely let you be; it's bad enough to let them make you be.

"I will not say that most tragedies are comedies—that is their tragedy—but at least remember that there is one thing worse than sorrow—to have to smile

above an aching heart, to crack jokes on the rack of the world.

"I don't ask you to have no fears—the wise man always fears, yet dares without being rash. Be good to all things, including yourself; seek to bring out the best in all things, including yourself. Cultivate something—even your appetite—better a gourmand than a martyr.

"I am glad you haven't touched the five hundred a year. Don't! You cannot give it away or will it. In case of your death before mine it reverts to me; in case of your death after mine to the Paris charities. I have all the money you want till I die. Write to me, please, at once. By the way, you can rely upon Bess Marguerite, who would not have replaced you in her friendship if she could have done so."

It was six o'clock in the evening and Barbara read the letter as she dressed for dinner. There was to be a small dinner party at the house that night; Craige would come in a few minutes, and the guests would begin to arrive shortly after.

There was no time to show it to Miss Walsingham. She stuck it in her dress and went on with her dressing.

The dinner party consisted of the Craiges and Miss Walsingham, Mr. and Mrs. Kopp, Mr. and Mrs. Vessell, and Mrs. Hole. There was to be whist afterwards—there were just enough for two tables.

"Beautiful evening," said Mr. Kopp, over the soup.

"Come over to-morrow and see my roses," said Mr. Vessell. "I've got them all pegged out."

"He, he!" giggled Mr. Kopp. "And we'll have a peg afterwards, eh?"

This was a joke.

"Isn't he terrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Vessell.

"Oh, dreadful!" replied Mrs. Hole, contemptuously.

"And we'll play peg top!" cried the self-appointed jester.

Miss Walsingham sighed audibly and Mrs. Hole put up her glasses and looked at her with a new interest, for the vil-

lage Grande Dame had a sense of the ironic, and nobody to practice it with, where there was everyone to practice it on.

"And how are the dear children?" inquired Mrs. Vessell, picking at her fish with a timid fork.

Barbara explained, replying to the questions that all the ladies at once felt it their duty to ask.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Hole, at last, "there is going to be a fair in the church—my church, I mean—next week, and I want all you ladies to contribute."

"Oh, delighted, of course," chorused the women.

"I want a oow wow!" exclaimed the jester, mimicking a popular song city people had forgotten three years before.

Again everybody had to laugh.

"I will send some rubber trees," said Mr. Vessell in his flat voice.

"How would a lot of cake and chocolate do?" asked Barbara. "The children like it."

"Splendid!" cried Mrs. Hole. "And you must take charge of the booth—the last time was such a success!"

"Oh, do!" chorused the ladies.

"Go ahead, Barbara," said Craige, carving the chicken.

"Very well," she consented.

"And you'll feed me with chocolate?" implored the jester.

"If you pay," she answered. "Mr. Vessell, we would be delighted to have some rubber trees; all that comes from your green houses is always so perfect."

Mr. Vessell beamed.

Miss Walsingham dug her fork into the white meat viciously. She did not have Barbara's patience.

"There is to be another meeting of the ladies before that—ah—event," said Mrs. Kopp, in her bitter tone. "It is—I may say—one more exclusively for adults. I refer to the Shakespeare club, at Mrs. Simpson's, Wednesday afternoon, at three precisely; tea at five. We are to analyze the 'Merchant of Venice,' compare it to the other plays, and decide wherein it is

superior and wherein it is not so. I trust we will all be there."

"I won't!" said Miss Walsingham, suddenly.

The intellectual lady looked at her from under raised eyebrows.

"You are going away?" she inquired superciliously.

"No!"

After a depressing pause the conversation was resumed. Mrs. Hole, who had tact, kicked Craige under the table and he told his best story—Barbara's dutiful laughter, at which provoked from the jester the time-honoured jest that it is a wife's duty to laugh at her husband's jokes.

Again everybody laughed.

But Miss Walsingham was not through yet. She had a huge sense of whimsicality and "intellectual fools," as she called them, were a pet hate of hers.

"The last time I attended a club meeting," she said, fixing Mrs. Kopp with a saturnine gaze, "I wore a white dimity frock to my knees and a pink silk sash."

Barbara turned slowly red, and her shoulders began to shake.

In the pause the sound of the jester's stifled giggles was broken in upon by his wife's voice in a tone of infinite frigidity.

"Indeed!" she said. "How very interesting!"

"Yes," replied the old lady, putting up her glasses and gazing at her adversary as though at some extinct monster. "I was seven! It was a dancing club."

"But don't you believe in intellectual enlightenment?" Mrs. Hole hastened to ask. "Don't you believe in those clubs which——"

"No."

"Why?"

"Think, don't talk, if you want to wake up!"

"But don't you think——" began Mrs. Vessell.

"Have some more chicken?" interrupted Craige.

"Would you rather have palms?" inquired Mr. Vessell, after having ruminated for fifteen minutes.

"Eh?" exclaimed Mrs. Hole. "What? Oh, the rubber plants will do very well, thank you."

Mr. Kopp told a story; everybody laughed as they had always laughed at it. Barbara began to realise why he never liked to go to strange houses—he was not unsocial, only afraid strangers might not be kind enough to laugh.

"But don't you think——" remarked Mrs. Vessell.

"Have some salad!" exclaimed Craige.

They adjourned to the library for their coffee, and afterwards the tables were cleared for whist. Barbara, with the letter in her breast, wondered if the evening would never end. She was to play partners with Mrs. Hole against Mrs. Kopp and Mr. Vessell.

Craige got the cigars and cigarettes. Miss Walsingham, in her foreign way, lit one of the latter. Barbara, who smoked, thought it best not to do so in this company.

"I always take a bit of tobacco after dinner," said the old lady, "always have,

ever since I lived in Russia; (Craig, pass me the Benedictine;) I suppose they don't do it at the lady clubs!"

Again there was a pause. Barbara waited in a horrified ecstasy; Mrs. Kopp merely sniffed.

"But don't you think——" quavered the weak voice of little Mrs. Vessell.

Craig searched desperately.

"Here," he said. "Have—have a cigarette!"

Mr. Kopp saved the situation by seizing two, as they were poked midway between him and the wondering Mrs. Vessell, and sticking them both in his mouth at once.

"You horrid man!" cried Mrs. Hole, gayly. "Shall we begin?"

To Barbara, that evening of cards seemed to last for centuries—the monotonous shuffle, cut, shuffle, cut, grew like the steady dripping of water—like the blows of a hammer falling at regular intervals.

Gradually her mind succeeded in passing above the level of the dull small talk about her, and she hardly heard Mrs.

Kopp's sour complainings, or Mrs. Vessell's quaver, or Mrs. Hole's ironic comments; even the jester's giggle died away in her attention. As for Mr. Vessell, Craige, and Miss Walsingham, they played in silence.

At last it was over.

Barbara listened to the effusive commonplaces of the departing guests, thanked Craige for offering to turn out the lights, and went wearily up the stairs.

It was twelve o'clock.

"Come in here!" said madame, from her doorway. "Now tell me what's the matter."

Barbara handed her the letter in silence. She read it through carefully, sitting in her silk dressing wrapper at her dressing-table, her white hair still in its elaborate pile on the top of her head.

"Umph!" she grunted. "When did you write to him?"

"A month ago."

"Umph!"

There was a long silence.

"Look here, child," said the old lady, at last, putting her glasses back on her nose,

and glancing up at the girl keenly. "If you want me to, I will talk to Craige; I've done it before, unavailingly, but he's older now; or I'll go over to see Autran, who is a great man; or I'll help you in any way I can. I've lots of money."

Again there was silence.

"What have you resolved to do?"

Barbara took the letter from her hand and held it over the flame of one of the dressing-table candles.

"I will try not to be the martyr," she said. "We can leave that for such persons as we saw to-night, if they had life enough. God preserve me from willing weakness! I will do my most and best for those whom destiny has given me. The rest doesn't matter. Autran's respect has made me braver, and I have yours and Bess Marguerite's. Good-night."

"Wait a minute!" cried the old lady. "What is the matter?"

Barbara smiled.

"I am tired of heroics!" she said. "'The life of a woman!' It is beating me down. It is almost done."

"Stop!" cried the old lady. "My child!"

Barbara took a step towards her, met her, and threw an arm around her neck.

"There," she said, "don't pity me. I have been very foolish, and have wanted more than there was to give. I have lived in dreams. There! Go to bed, dear friend. I am going too. Good-night."

"Barbara!" cried the old lady.

"Good-night," said the girl, on the threshold.

"Barbara!" came her husband's voice from his own room. "It is late."

"It is late," she repeated. "Good-night."

CHAPTER XIV

TWENTY-FIVE TO TWENTY-NINE

The summer passed, and Barbara was twenty-six. There was no change.

The next year the little girl, Dorothy, began to go to school. The situation was the same. Now Barbara was twenty-seven.

Craige's income, after going down a little for a year or so, came up again to the former level. He worked hard, and was competent without initiative; his ambitions had never been higher than comfort and respectable standing in a decent community.

He went in to town every morning on the eight-fifteen train, and came out every afternoon on the five-four. He had joined the Saturday night local poker club, where the ladies did not appear, and was utterly content.

What he made supported his family in ease, and in some little elegance, paid their expenses — his were little — and allowed Barbara to perform her social duties, go shopping, and go to the theatre when she pleased. (Her father's income had died with him, and Craige had no relatives from whom to inherit.)

Another year passed; Barbara was twenty-eight. There had been no change. Nothing but the same endless monotony of petty cares and interests.

The children were all going to school now. She was busy every evening helping them over their lessons.

Miss Walsingham came to spend the Christmas holidays with her, grandmothering the children and mothering Barbara.

"Have you asked Autran's advice any more?" she asked.

"No," replied Barbara, adding, after a pause, "I was a foolish child, and he knows it."

The old lady was failing. Only her gallantry, her whimsicality, and her ener-

getic temper, with, under it, her infinite kindness, remained.

During this year Craige was induced to run for a political position.

He came home earlier now in the afternoons and spent his extra time in the village with the fat Irish "boss."

The local rounders of the town slouched after him, yelling jovially, from the wicker, swinging saloon doors of Main Street, and the tax-supported solid "men" lounged in his wake from their corner by the flag staff outside the city hall.

Puffy German aldermen panted after him in anxious greeting, and Irishmen, with voices harshened with whiskey, caught him familiarly by the lapel and drew him into corners to discuss the situation and their perquisites.

Self-advertising prophets who had forgotten to turn down the backs of the collars of their overcoats, orated to him importantly in cigar shops to an audience of grinning village toughs; and commuters, harassed by hurry and dulled by monotony, insincerely promised their sup-

port as they hastened from depot-wagon to station news-stand.

He made some speeches from a board platform erected on the main street, and was escorted to his home in an open carriage, drawn by two white livery-stable horses, and surrounded by a straggling half dozen of the more drunken members of the parade, their wabbling torches dripping stinking oil on the trim grass borders of the sleeping neighbours' lawns.

He was compelled to make them a speech from the upstairs balcony, and after a chorus of hoots, which turned to yells of enthusiasm, as the beer was carried out by the maid, they departed, leaving a few broken tin torches on the trampled turf and an odour of oil that it took the lawn hoses of the neighbours a week to wash out.

The next afternoon seven men—five fat Irishmen, one thin German, and one fat German—were ushered into Craige's library.

"We're the committee," a red-nosed fellow announced.

Craige shut the folding doors, after ordering whiskey.

Half an hour later he opened the door to ask for more whiskey, and to tell the servant to ask his wife for the coat that contained his cheque book.

He escorted the committee out, standing talking to them for a long time on the steps.

"I'll lose a lot of money on this," he said to Barbara that night. "I'm not the sort of man who goes into politics for gain, I'm honest."

"Then why did you give those men a cheque?" exclaimed Barbara. "They all have money."

"Bosh!" interrupted Craige. "I hate a woman who talks politics. You'll be a club woman next. Besides, it was campaign expenses. Come to bed!"

Two evenings later he was brought home in a carriage, deadened by yells and the screeching of brass bands.

He was carried into the house, and only succeeded in getting free from his escort on condition that he make a speech from the upper balcony.

He was elected.

They would not go. They crowded below him, their torches swinging, dying out, the moonlight slowly stealing over their shadowy forms.

The maid shrinkingly touched Craige's arm where he stood on the upper balcony, and, greeted by a vulgar roar, whispered something to him.

"The committee, sir!"

He went down into the library and found the same men.

They took the people away with them.

An Italian organ grinder, with his wife and a street piano, had had an inspiration that they could make some money from this enthusiasm, which they did not understand, and had followed the discordant crowd.

Now they began to play, with singular inappropriateness, "Linger Longer, Lucy."

The rowdies, the most famous, the most infamous, piled on them and made them play to the crowd's demand. The sad tune stopped in the middle of a bar, and

in a moment there broke on the air "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the ground," ripped out three times too fast by the hoodlums, who had seized the organ, and the procession of "important citizens" lurched down the street in all the vanity of their bombastic vulgarity.

Craige was a public character.

A letter arrived from Bess Marguerite a few days later.

"You will wonder why," she wrote, "but I have ceased seeing Cæsar. I could not stand his quiet, his easiness, his changeless softness. He is always the amateur—the gentleman, not the man; artistic but erratic, ambitious but without energy. He takes my break with him with gentle resignation; if I would suggest it, he would doubtless be pleased to be a sister to me.

"I leave him with the knowledge that Cæsar is a cultivated, artistic, delightful gentleman. If I had loved him——

"And now I am going to surprise you still more. My break with Cæsar is quite ancient history, and I am going to marry a

count! I must seem to you a dreadful woman. The affair is peculiar. He is over sixty, very rich, and very noble; the only thing a life of follies has not taught him is that folly is folly. He seems to sufficiently adore my what he is pleased to call 'beauty,' to offer me his title. Me? I offer him nothing; I will be the hostess in his house—no more. In reality, he wants to end his life with the 'tone' of respectability as his similar ancestors have done; and he must marry somebody; and as I am very respectable and not a fool, and am reputed to be an heiress, (all I have is a small inheritance from my mother), he has honoured me. The inevitable always happens, the improbable usually, the impossible sometimes; add the tragic and the ridiculous; drop it all into the mess of the mediocre, and we have the dish of life—the dish we must all eat of or die; and we must work for even that. Autran says that life is a milk-toast that failed of being a Spanish omelet. And, speaking of work, that woman is a fool who believes that she

can best do things herself; the cleverness of woman is in making men do things for her. Really, there is only one thing that woman can do better than man—bear children—and I will never have my name in the birth column! I am not maternal. The truth is that the only man who would not hate me—admiration and consequent flirtation are quite aside—is the man none of whose ideals have remained commonplace.

“Barbara, it is a horrible thing to have missed love—to not have had it I mean. In my unhappiness, an unhappiness more than my gayety indicates, I have made my mind feed upon my heart. All the lonely desire in me has turned into a remorseless and incessant energy. I am ambitious; I want to become the ‘great lady’ here in the heart of the woman’s world, to lead in originality, in cleverness, in beauty, in importance, to make a great salon, to help diplomacy, and art, and science, and literature, to win its recognition. And yet—ah Barbara, I am very lonely, dear!

"I know that your life is dull. I tell you this, thinking it may help you to know that there is another woman who has in her soul the ache of the unfulfilled. I have all you have never had; you have all I will never have.

"I tried it with Cæsar. I have been a very foolish woman, but my life is only commencing.

"What nonsense it all is! You are used to my quick changes!

"I don't even apologize for this very manuscript of a letter. (I know lots of poets!) You help me keep up my English!

"Honestly, I think monsieur the count has the best of the bargain; I told him so, (he was calling on me one afternoon and I stood in a white and yellow dress, arranging some roses), and he paid me a compliment on the tilt of my nose.

"Here I am writing this way, and, *mon dieu*, I'm twenty-eight! But I've firmly determined not to look my age till I'm a grandmother at least—as I'll never have children, (I don't count my husband's, you see!)—well.

"Am I not quite French?"

"Am sending a box for the kids."

"Compliments to your husband."

"Always——"

"Bess."

The box was, like those Autran sent every Christmas, filled with things carefully selected for each individual child and for Barbara. In this case, her package was new French music. During the long months she played it to herself sadly.

The next autumn, when Barbara was twenty-nine, Craige began to complain of her reading so many novels.

"You are wasting your time on trashy literature!" he exclaimed one evening. "If you read something of permanent or practical value—but you're simply neglecting the children for the sake of gratifying a morbid taste for romance. I don't say a word against the classics, I am the last man to do that; I worked my way through college—but this modern trash!"

"But," protested Barbara, "nearly all the great literature of the world has been fiction, sometimes in verse form like

Homer, and sometimes in dramatic form like Shakespeare. Besides——”

“We will not discuss it further”; said Craige, unfolding one of his pile of evening newspapers, “read, if you want to!”

“I will!” she answered, her old temper flashing out once more for a moment.

Craige sighed.

Nevertheless she sat in the evenings hereafter with her hands folded, watching him while he turned his papers, ready for a game of cards when he wished one.

Only in the day was she free. She grew to dread the evenings.

Some three weeks after this, he brought her home some books of his own selection. He left them for her without comment.

The next day, after he was gone, her long held anger broke forth for a moment under this new oppression in her last pleasure, and she fed the fire with them in sombre and silent mutiny. Her last hope of companionship with Craige seemed to go with them as she watched the burning of “The History of New England,” “Tales from Shakespeare,”

"The Household Guide," "A Short History of the Discovery of the United States," and "Doctor Drummond's Sermons."

Miss Walsingham, on her next visit, remonstrated with Craige once more.

"You're turning her into a slave!" she exclaimed. "Take her into town to live, at least. You haven't the excuse of the children any more; they're not babies any longer. The girl's eating her heart out, and she's trying her best to love you and be what you want her to be. With her nature, it's simply torture!"

"I won't have my family cooped up in a little apartment!" said Craige, shutting his jaws.

"You are in the city every day," she cried. "The home is rest to you. There isn't anything on earth more fatiguing than enforced rest, and that's what it is to her; besides, you don't want any of the things she wants."

"I haven't fortune enough to buy a house," said Craige, with determination, "and I prefer to live in my own; and as

for one of those crowded little apartments with no air, I'm not going to have the children die on my hands."

"Curse it, then!" exclaimed the old lady, swearing, in her fury, as she sometimes did. "Live in a tenement! Do you mean to say that you prefer this mean, dishonest, gossiping, stupid, infinitely-commonplace country suburb, full of fools, to the city—any city—where men and women live instead of female asses and masculine pumpkin-heads! Good God! I'd rather live in a slum than in a place like this, where the town lives to cheat you and the fools in the residence districts live because they are country-mad!

"Do you know what effect this sort of thing has on the mind of even an unambitious woman? Look around you—some of these poor provincialized vegetables might have been women—women with women's life, and vivacity, and gayety, and charm, and helpfulness, and beauty. And what are they now?

"They are so out of touch with life, so prematurely aged and yet so immature,

that they would be burdens to any city man I know. If their husbands weren't half mad with the 'country,' and as dull as a commuting automaton, they would feel it too!

"Suppose you had to stay out here, what would become of your mind? Fortunately, like most business men, you leave most of it in your office!

"But you can see the effect even on men, the effect of being provincialized. Are the old residents here like city men? Have you ever stood in the Grand Central depot and watched the suburbanites come in—yes, and in the Pennsylvania depot, and the Lackawanna depot, and at the Thirty-fourth Street ferry, and at the Staten Island ferry, and on the Brooklyn bridge—at any of those great mouths through which that greater city, called the suburbs, pours its millions every day into the heart round which they lie—have you ever stood at any of these places and seen the difference between the men and women of the suburbs and those of the city?

"I don't say that it is not all right for the average, the typical, for the great mass of people who make up what we call the 'public'; but for a woman like Barbara, who is not ordinary, who is not commonplace, who is not mediocre, Craige, it's madness, and God's own waste!

"Oh, I know how all this seems to you! It seems to you exaggerated and foolish and impractical. You cannot comprehend that what would be quite useless to one sort of nature, is desperately practical—almost necessary—to another. You are not unkind, only you cannot, simply cannot, understand and make real to yourself the needs of a nature different from your own."

She leaned forward.

"Now, seriously, Craige—(see here, my boy, you know I love all of you, and you'll forgive an old woman's vehemence)—do you really and truly believe this is a fit place for Barbara?"

Craige struggled hard to comprehend her, struggled conscientiously, striving to

see her reasons, trying his best to see what she felt to be their importance.

"I don't see why not, for the life of me!" he said at last. "She goes to the city as much as she pleases. So far as the intellectual life is concerned, one can think here as well as anywhere else."

"Think!" repeated Miss Walsingham, bitterly. "That's just what she is doing!"

"Then what the devil does she want?" exclaimed Craige, his patience exhausted under this succession of pleas he did not understand. "I'm no gadding mountebank to run about over Europe, 'seeing the sights' and let everything go to ruin at home while I spend my good money on a lot of rascally foreigners; besides, if I did take her abroad she'd want to stay there—(oh, I'm not such a fool as you think, madame!)—and either desert her husband and children or expatriate them into a foreign country. No, sir! My own country is good enough for me, and I don't care how good the others may be!"

"Then, as to giving up here, I am not going to expose the children to the influ-

ences of the city and also endanger their health for any foolish woman's whims, even though she may be my wife; and I'm sure every proper husband will feel likewise, if he isn't a blackguard.

"I have given my wife a comfortable home, a family, social position, reasonable enjoyments, a respectable environment, what more can she want? I have never given her a day's worry since my wedding day. I have worked hard, I have made enough to keep us, I have not been stingy, I have no disreputable habits, I have not given her one moment of jealousy.

"In truth, Miss Walsingham, I do not see exactly what ground you have for such an allegation as 'madness' and 'waste.' I do not believe in the least I have committed either, in any way, mental, moral, or physical.

"You are right in remarking that your suggestions may seem — ah — exaggerated. Personally, I cannot countenance any such break-up of the family relations as their adoption would inevitably lead to.

They seem to me, to be quite frank with you,—well, unconventional!

“I am a self-made man, and as such, I hope, a practical one. I am, as you are so kind as to remark, not unkind. I have always held myself free from those temptations to which other, and more intellectual, I deny it not, men succumb; my conscience has been my monitor, and I have allowed myself no compromise between what I considered my duty and those chances which would lead me into wrong doing; which would lead me to consider, even for a moment, what my reason would tell me was not for the well being of my family and myself.

“I am not unselfish, in fact I—what is the matter?”

Madame had risen to her feet.

“I have only been counting the personal mentions,” she said from the threshold. “That is why I am laughing—thirty-seven! Good-night!”

She turned at the door for a moment.

“No,” she said, “you’re not a selfish man—I don’t mean this ironically—it is that

you simply don't comprehend anybody who is not yourself. Good-night!"

It was destined to be the old lady's last visit.

She left the next day just at noon, while the factory whistles far away in the valley were blowing their common, mournful note. Barbara never saw her again.

She died a few weeks later, in her house in Boston, after three days' illness, her glasses on her nose, a book in her hand, her correspondence materials on her writing table at her side.

Barbara wept bitterly; her one friend on this side of the world was gone; her brave, wise, loving, gallant, pitying, old friend, with all her irony and romance and pretended crossness and great lady airs and infinite tenderness, was dead.

Never more would she see that high white hair piled above the square forehead over the eagle nose, never more shyly meet the glance of those keen eyes, hiding their tenderness as though ashamed of it, never more hear the

strong, sure voice raised in whimsical jest or wise and tolerant pleading.

The honest grasp of the hand would never meet hers again, never again would the kind shoulders that had never known her own child's touch receive her head.

It seemed to Barbara that a part of the bravery of living had gone out of life, and she stored away the memory of her friend in her lonely heart, sick with a new solitude, meeting the world with a new desolation but with the same old bravery —always the same old bravery.

CHAPTER XV

THIRTY

It was shortly after this time that Craige began to become more markedly indifferent. He was utterly unconscious of it; if anyone had told him he would not have believed it.

A certain patience, a far-away dreaminess, half regret, had come into her eyes, and though she did not seem her years, she looked like a girl old for her age. The coquetry was nearly gone. She tempted him no longer.

"My God!" she cried silently to herself sometimes, lying awake in the darkness of the night. "Is even that going from me? Is even his affection going away?"

The habit of love remained with him, and occasionally he would pat her negligently on the shoulder of an evening. She would lean towards him pitifully,

mutely begging for another touch, and he would turn away unseeing and pick up his newspapers.

He never neglected her. He was kind and faithful and he gave her plenty of money. He never knew the hunger in her heart. There was no change.

He never took her hand now; it would have seemed silly to him. When, once in a while, he kissed her on his return home in the evening, it was not a caress, hardly a greeting; merely the unthought-of habit of the years before seduction had died.

By all the heart-breaking wiles of the woman growing old, the woman who clings to the passion that is dying out in the heart of the man she loves, by all the tender lures of the woman who realises that she no longer attracts, Barbara strove to retain his fondness, to reawaken the love that was sinking into slumber, to bring back some return of the old years when her prettiness at least had attracted him.

She dressed for him, wearing the gowns

he used to admire, doing her hair coquettishly, trying, with a terrible little trembling at the corners of her mouth, to flirt with him.

Sometimes he roused himself a little, and, for a moment, she caught a hint of the old lover-look in his eyes; but it faded, and the habit of life shut down over him again and her losing struggle dropped back into indifference out of his slight attention.

She missed Miss Walsingham terribly. The old lady would at least have understood; the people about her—women who had passed through the same universal tragedy without knowing it was tragedy—would have been merely surprised and puzzled if they had noticed it. She had no one but Autran and Bess Marguerite now; both on that other side of the world that she would never see.

It was shortly after her thirtieth birthday that she received the letter from Bess Marguerite, telling of her wedding.

It was a gorgeous affair from the Madeleine. Autran, and a number of the

count's mistresses, were there, with a crowd of his society friends and several prominent literary persons, friends of the bride.

"A contrast to yours, my dear," she wrote. "You married into love at least,—and I? Ah, me! We are very foolish, we women! It is hard to have no love. Well, I will try to make him not regret his bargain. Autran was the first to congratulate me."

"'Married into love,'" mused Barbara, "'at least!'"

Now even that was going!

She looked out at the dripping autumn trees where a few brown leaves yet hung in the chill air.

The winter passed slowly. There was no change.

Little Dorothy began to be much of a companion to Barbara now; the child was like her, with her intuitive sympathy. The boys, Jack and Kenneth, were stupid, boisterous, lusty youngsters; she hoped that they would grow more studious later.

The youngest, Kenneth, was Craige's

favourite, and he always wondered at Barbara's preference for the girl; he loved all his children, because they were his, but in spite of himself he could not help feeling that a boy was the more important—a boy would be a man, like his father; a girl would be a woman; yet in an after-dinner speech, or in his love making, he would have declared with impressive belief, believing it real, that woman was "infinitely above man."

He would have said this to Barbara even now if it had occurred to him to pay her compliments.

He never did so any more; instead he commented adversely upon her dressing. In her struggle to win back his attention, she had given long hours of thought lately to what she looked youngest in.

"I wish you wouldn't be quite so gay in your dressing, Barbara," he said one evening, gazing at her black lace dinner dress with disapproval.

There was a rose in her hair. She was resolved to make him smile at her to-night.

"Would you prefer me to dress more ordinarily?" she asked.

"It would be more sensible," he replied, cutting off the end of his cigar with his cutter with sedate precision. "I don't want my wife to look like a ballet dancer!"

"I am sorry you——" she said in a low voice, and stopped.

"Oh, yes," he answered, holding the match to his cigar. "I know—very charming, and all that, but——"

Hereafter she wore plain gowns in the evening, and in the daytime quiet browns, leaving out the touch of yellow that became her so well and made her look girlish.

It was hard to leave off that last touch of yellow!

Once more she resolved to tempt him; for the last time.

She dressed for the part, putting on a low-necked gown, even at the risk of displeasing him; she even put a touch of rouge to her cheeks—timidly—for the first time in her life.

She fixed her hair carefully, with one

American Beauty rose, coquettishly matching her fluffy gown.

She had the lights turned out in the drawing room and substituted candles with red shades. He was not to arrive till ten o'clock that night, and she had dinner alone.

She sat ready, waiting.

He opened the front door, closed it gently, stuck his umbrella into the rack, and came into the room.

"Ah, Barbara!" he began. "Eh, dressed up again?"

He looked at her disapprovingly.

"Sit down," she said. "I will bring your supper here; a little soup and some chicken, and some lobster Newberg out of the chafing-dish, and a salad and coffee. Wait a moment, dear."

She brought it in herself from the kitchen where the servants had kept it warm on the tray, and made him comfortable with little pats and punches of the cushions she arranged behind him. She brought his slippers, and kneeling before him lovingly, helped him unlace

his wet shoes and put them on. She brought his papers from his overcoat pockets in the hall, and his cigars and matches from the library. She waited on him like a servant, and when it was all done, bent to kiss him, shyly.

One arm was around his neck. In her red dress, her bare shoulders, pale as ivory in the low red light, the rose in her loose brown hair, she looked as young as a nymph—unreal, like some fairy princess—seductive as a dream of courtezans.

"Craigie, dear," she whispered. "Won't you kiss me? I—I—I love you, just awfully much, truly! And I—ah, Craigie, be a little tender to me!"

There was a pause while she leaned over him, her longing in her eyes.

"Well, yes," he said tentatively, "but I don't see——"

"Craigie!" she cried in a voice in which all the passion of her soul was hinted. "Craigie, don't you see that I love you? That I want you? Ah, sweetheart of my youth, my lover, always! Don't you see? Don't you see that it's just you I want?"

Don't you see,—oh please, please, don't be cold to me! I know I'm a fool, and all that."

She was sobbing now.

"There, dear, there!" he soothed, patting her on the shoulder uncertainly. "You are tired. I know I was late."

"Only love me!" she cried, sinking at his feet. "Just take me in your arms once. I——"

"There, dear!" he repeated, raising her. "There, there! You know I do love you! So! Now it's all over, isn't it? What a foolish little girl! There, now, sit down in your chair."

She hid her head in the soft back of one of the great chairs.

"I know, little one," he soothed, tenderly. "But you must be a good little wife now. It's an awfully good dinner you have to-night, dear. Now try to be sensible!"

"Craigie," she said once more, her voice trembling, "do you truly still love me? I haven't anyone but you, you know."

"Of course," he replied, beginning to

be irritated by this sentimentality. "You know that!"

For a long time there was no other sound than the crackling of the fire.

"What's the matter?" he said at last.

"Nothing," she answered, after a pause, rising from her chair. "I am going to bed now."

"That is wise," he said in a tone of commendation. "You are tired and over-excited. I will be up in a little while, dear."

She walked uncertainly towards the door, stopped and turned on the threshold.

"Craig!" she said.

He turned.

"Yes?"

"Nothing."

She turned again and made her way slowly up the stairs, her lace skirt dragging.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST REBELLION

It was the next day—the twenty-fifth of June—that there came that letter from Bess Marguerite which brought to Barbara the greatest desolation she had ever yet felt.

It was very brief.

“Last night, at twilight, as Autran sat at his table on the boulevard outside the café du Cardinal, over his ‘pernod,’ he slowly leaned against the back of his chair, and remained sitting still, upright. When, after a long time, one of the waiters touched him, he was dead. I have just received the details in my palace.

“A man who had sat near him said to the waiter that he had been attracted by Autran’s—who sat alone—suddenly uttering a woman’s name in a low voice. The man has disappeared into the world of Paris without telling what name it was.

"Did he see some woman in the passing crowd, or was it——"

The letter ended with a dash, with nothing more except the signature—"Bess Marguerite."

It was eight o'clock in the morning and Barbara had read the letter on the piazza where she had taken it from the postman.

She went in quietly and told Craige in an ordinary tone of voice; he was just getting ready to go to the city; he was a little later than usual this morning and was in a hurry.

He sympathised with her in the death of a friend, really sorry at her loss.

"Go in to town and get Kenneth's stockings as you had arranged to do," he said, awkwardly, "it will do you good."

"Please, Craige!" she pleaded.

"There, there!" he exclaimed, standing in the hallway, ready gloved, his hat and stick in his hand. "I know it is very sad, but it is not as if a member of the family had died! After all, the friends we know are more or less—well, we only select them out of a number—but the family!

I really am sorry, but one must take these things practically. Well—good-bye!”

“May I go to see Madame Jouin for dinner?” she asked.

“Why, yes,” he said, “of course. In that case you had better send Kenneth’s stockings to the package office at the station, and I will get them—get them there in time for the four-two train. Don’t be late.”

“Good-bye,” she said.

He ran down the steps and she heard his footsteps die down the blue-stone walk.

She attended to the housekeeping, giving the cook her instructions in the kitchen and the maid hers upstairs, and saw the children off to school. Then she dressed, walked to the car, and caught the ten-twenty-seven train—the “shopping train”—to the city. She had the pleasure of riding in with Mrs. Hole, who talked incessantly.

She took the Fourth Avenue car, transferred across Twenty-third Street, and

bought the stockings for Kenneth at Best's.

Then she went along Twenty-third Street from shop to shop, buying what things she wanted; she had plenty of money in her purse.

She was dazed by the suddenness of the shock of the morning, still in that dreamy state that follows for a time on the stroke of some great change of either sorrow or happiness; the quiet that intervenes before realisation, like that momentary anæsthesia of the nerves after a hurt before the pain.

It was when she was buying gloves in Sterns' that the first realising thought came to her—the first flash that brought her tumultuous memories up to the present.

She laid down the gray suedes slowly.

"He is already buried," she said to herself.

"Will you take these?" said the sales-girl.

"Yes."

She paid, waited for her package, put it

under her arm with the others, and went out.

"I must not be morbid," she reflected, remembering Craige's invariable common sense. "Autran is dead, but on the other side of the world; I have my life here."

The crowds of finely dressed women jostled against her in the warm noon sunlight. The few hurrying men passed by, mopping their foreheads with limp handkerchiefs. The sun shone pitilessly from a cloudless sky. It was one of the hottest days of summer.

She went up to Maillard's for a cold drink, and then crossed to Dorlon's for lunch.

But when it came, she could not eat.

"No," she said to herself. "I cannot go to see Madame Jouin, she is too sympathetic."

In her uncertain loneliness she wandered along Twenty-third Street again, crossed Sixth Avenue, and went into Proctor's.

She found a seat well to the front in the orchestra.

The curtain was down between turns. A piano, played with the rapidity of lightning by a young Jew, ripped out the "Florodora Chorus" with trills. Two boys in uniforms inserted cardboard notices in the side-racks and the curtain went up.

The stage revealed triple horizontal bars with mattresses underneath.

Three small, muscular men in pink silk tights skipped from the wings, two from one side and one from the other, paused a moment in an acrobat's attitude—one leg forward, the toe just touching the ground, both arms curved gracefully in the air—and began.

After them came the German comedians. One was tall and gaunt, in a dress suit, and twirled a stick, attempting to imitate the alleged manner of the millionaire rake; the other was his grotesque opposite, his brocade vest protruding over a pillow, his trousers ending a foot from his boots, a pigmy Tyrolian hat on his bald head.

"Vat you tink mine sister Carrie she say to me dis morning?"

"I don't know. What did she say, Hans?"

"Haf you used——"

The fat man squared off from his companion, who instantly assumed a boxing attitude and remained for a moment balancing on his slim legs.

They resumed their positions.

"And what did you say?" asked the questioner in a bored voice.

"I say, 'goot morning, Carrie, haf you—mit der accent on der 'you'—ach, leiber!"

He squared off again.

The audience applauded, and Barbara rose and went out. She could not stand this enjoyment.

From the doorway she heard a sound of yodeling, just as the door swung, drowned instantly by the roar of the street.

The day felt endlessly long to her, yet at moments she seemed to have come into town only an hour ago.

She went over to Fifth Avenue to visit some friends, though she was hardly in calling costume, and found them in the

midst of packing to go abroad. They proposed tea at the Waldorf, and she grew quite animated in the Turkish room, nervously so, as she realised.

When she parted from them it was dusk, and the avenue was crowded with the home-coming carriages of the people who were still in town.

She walked slowly across Thirty-fourth Street towards Broadway. The shadows were stealing over the housetops. At the corners the street lamps winked into sudden radiance, and the electric signs of Herald Square lit up one by one. Up Sixth Avenue and Broadway the glimmering cars crept slowly, loaded with standing people whose forms showed in a swaying blur through the flashing windows.

"They don't expect me home," said little Barbara, alone in the shadows. "I will stay in awhile yet; I want to think."

The misery was all coming over her now, the new sense of desolation which oppressed her with a strange heartbreak, she hardly knew why.

It was all becoming real, the sense of

loss, the comprehending that, with Autran, the friend of her girlhood, she had lost the last companion of her happy years; the last save Bess Marguerite, who was now vanished into a distant splendour, a different life. In Autran she had lost the human being who was, if she ever chose to ask him, utterly at her command; he who represented always a last chance of escape from the isolation that was creeping over her heart, from the solitude that was closing around her life in all its grim sordidness. His passing had taken with it a final refuge—one to which she might never have fled—but the ghost of an heretofore unappreciated feeling of safety, of reliance, of the certainty of comprehension and welcome, and protection, swept over her like a coldness and made her shiver.

She took a nearly empty car down to the Albermarle, and fixing her hair in the ladies' parlour, went into the dining-room.

Her vigorous body demanded food and she ate ravenously. The strain she had held in control had wearied her, and every

tense nerve in her nature rose up, asking replenishment for the exhaustion.

The room was large, and filled with people, but the tables were divided from one another by palms. The windows were open and the cool of the night swept over the place. All was dim; the dish-littered white cloths, their silver sparkling dully, were lit faintly by the shaded electric lamps. Outside, beyond the open windows at the end of the room, the street was black; around her, on both sides of the alcove where she sat, rose the hum of talk—a girl's gay voice occasionally rising above the ceaseless monotone in some bantering exclamation.

The dinner had been a good one. Barbara felt better. In the screen of the palms she leaned her elbows on the table and her chin on her hands and thought.

She went over every phase of the situation carefully, following down, in her memory, each cause to its effect—drawing a map of her past, and from it deducing the probable course of her future.

A great calmness had come over her, a

cold calculativeness which she realised was to be significant. Once for all, in her life, she was going to lay things bare and compare and choose. She realised that it was the last rebellion, yet hardly a rebellion, rather a cold comparison of values. Once over, the decision was probably for all time.

Very simply she paralleled her causes and means for happiness, one against the other.

She went over the same old weary arguments again and came to the same old weary conclusion. In spite of even the passing of his love for her she cared for Craige in the quiet loyalty of a nature made for loving. She was aware that his lack of such feeling had nothing to do with his intellectual level; she realised that perhaps the majority of the world's greatest intellects had been incapable of a devoted and exclusive passion.

And she could not leave the children; it would be cowardice.

The old facts repeated themselves again and again.

And if she wanted to fly, now that Autran was dead, the time was passed.

She called the waiter, paid her bill, and rose with a sigh.

"No use," she murmured.

She turned into Broadway, her mind working wearily against the old impregnable facts. Suddenly she realised how tired she was; it was almost nine o'clock, and she had been on her feet nearly all day.

From all about her, strange eyes of men met hers in a way she did not understand. The crowd pressed around her like a sea. Overhead the great electric signs wavered and blazed; the thronged sidewalk was lighter than day.

A great misery swept over her like a wave.

"No use," she repeated to herself.
"No use."

At Twenty-ninth Street she saw many of the women who were moving beside her detach themselves from the procession and turn down the cross street towards Sixth Avenue, entering doorways

under various glowing signs that projected over the street.

"I will follow them and get some coffee," she decided.

She made her way to a swing door on the upper side of the street and went in.

It was a long hall, filled with little tables; at one end an orchestra played on a balcony; along the walls were crude paintings, set in as panels. At the tables sat gayly dressed women, drinking, either alone or with men; waiters hurried about bearing glasses.

She seated herself at a small table near the door and ordered her black coffee.

A flower seller came up and wanted to sell her roses.

She looked about her with a half frightened interest, realising that she was not among good women.

She studied their faces with an almost awed curiosity, it was so strange to her. Dimly she wondered if they were happy, they seemed so gay!

The orchestra stopped, and a piano began above her head. When its swing-

ing popular tune was done the orchestra began again.

Women passed her, going in and out; there was a constant flap and bang of the swing doors. Glasses jingled; there was the click of money. Over the dull, mixed murmur, a woman's laughter rang out occasionally, high and false, with a rancorous note of satire in it. Everything was decorous, subdued—a decorousness that covered unspeakable things.

The misery that had been growing all day within her heart rose till it was almost a cry.

For the first time, here in this alien place, she realised the added emptiness the death of Autran had brought to her. In a flash she saw her future life: the yellow and white villa, the trees in their wire guards, the blue-stone road, the grass borders, the flower beds. She heard the whirl of the country trolley car coming up the hill, the flat voice of the cook singing, out of tune, over her dishes in the kitchen; the shrilling of the crickets in the grass, and the long, sordid note of

the noon-day factory whistles from the valley.

She noticed the looks of men directed towards her. They smiled in a half-amused fashion; some of the girls giggled.

She caught sight of herself in a mirror. She saw the plain brown dress, the simple hat; she examined the face under it; examined the patient eyes, the mouth with its sad little droop at the corners. Where was her gayety gone?

"My God!" she cried to herself. "I could not even be one of these! I am too old, too dulled; all that made me attractive is dead in me; I am only——"

The misery swept over her in a new wave—misery at the final realisation of her defeat—of fate's victory. Destiny, circumstance—had conquered.

"Only the average woman," she repeated in her soul. "The average! Ah, Bess Marguerite, way off there——"

The orchestra leader raised his hand; there were three sharp taps on the desk; the orchestra broke into the "Florodora Chorus."

The music swung and crashed, the violin bows rose and fell in regular movement to the swooping tune.

When it was at an end the people tapped their glasses on the tables lightly for an encore; the laughter never ceased.

The orchestra leader turned towards his men—the “Intermezzo” of Mascagni rose on the air.

It wailed in her heart like a dirge. In this place of sneers, the laughter kept on.

At last the music lifted slowly to its high, soft end—to silence.

Again there was the slight tapping on the tables.

The piano above her banged out into “Salome.” It seemed to fit the place. There was something Satanic in it, an infernal music, the devil’s tune.

Barbara was utterly weary. The last struggle had exhausted her—now it was done.

“Autran,” she murmured weakly as she rose and went towards the door.

The piano was still now, and the orches-

tra began again, ever the same, in the same old insistent round.

"Not even one of these," she repeated. "Not even one of these."

She went out through the incessantly swinging doors.

* * * * *

The throng on Broadway was as great as ever. Wearily she joined it, moving along unseeing, conscious only of the misery in her heart, and that she was very tired.

"No use," she kept repeating in her heart, "no use!"

Again the strange looks of the men met hers, the gayly dressed women with furtive eyes brushed by her.

The exhaustion that comes after surrender was on her.

She took a car at Thirty-third Street, transferred at Forty-second, waited half an hour in the station and got in her train.

She hardly realised the journey. She was worn out, body and mind. She had given up.

At New Rockhill she took one of the station cabs.

It seemed a moment, or a year, until the jolting hack, going slowly up the hill, reached her home.

She dismissed the wagon, opened the door softly, turned out the low burning lamp in the hall, and went softly up the stairs. It was twelve o'clock.

From Craige's chamber came the sound of his regular breathing.

She tiptoed into her own room and crossed over to the open window without making a light.

Outside the night was aglow with the gold of stars; there was no moon; it was very dark.

Far away in the midnight sky she thought she could see a faint luminousness, the vast reflection of the city.

She knelt down in the darkness by the window sill and rested her arms upon it.

"Good-bye, Autran," she murmured.

She knelt there motionless. It was absolutely still.

A long time passed.

"Dear God," she said, very low, "help me to do my duty. I have nothing any more, but that. Help me to give up myself and forget. Help me. I have surrendered. It is done."

Her head sank on her arms on the window sill.

There was not a sound.

CHAPTER XVII

BROKEN

Barbara came slowly up the blue-stone path.

It was the next day, a little before noon.

She climbed the steps, opened the door and passed along the corridor to the kitchen.

"I have done the marketing, Mary," she said. "I have ordered chops for dinner and a cauliflower, and you had better make a rice pudding. The coffee will come with the other things."

"Yes, ma'am," said the cook. "There's cut sugar needed; will I order it from the man?"

"Yes," said Barbara. "Oh, and Mary, don't forget to have the coffee a little stronger to-night; my husband prefers it so."

"Yes, ma'am. An'—an' may I go out to-night, ma'am? I know it's not me

night, but 'tis me sister Annie's baby I want to take something to, her that is named Gladys, ye know, ma'am—an'——"

"All right," smiled Barbara. "You may go of course. You won't be out too late?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. Surely, I would be——"

"Very well," said Barbara, smiling back at the girl's gratitude. "That's well."

She interviewed the maid and inspected the morning's work, giving instructions about getting a man to beat the rugs on Saturday.

Then she wandered out on the piazza and seated herself in one of the great Quaker rockers.

At one end there was a screen of honeysuckle vines throwing a patch of shade some distance up the boards, but where she sat the sunlight slanted in from under the roof almost to her feet.

Beyond, in the dusty grass of the road-border, a cricket whirred his incessant note. The poplar saplings in their tree-boxes along the road turned up the silvery sides of their leaves to the glare. An indolent bumble-bee lit on a red clo-

ver-head outside on the edge of the lawn, and, after a few busy moments, rose again slowly and blundered away, buzzing faintly, to the next clover-top. It was very hot.

Over the dusty roadway, its unground blue-stone half hidden in the sandy earth, shimmered a palpitating haze of heat. On the opposite side, the other villas had their shutters closed; the families were either gone away for the summer or were staying indoors trying to keep cool.

The postman's step crunched up the path.

He stopped to open a gate below and passed round the path along the side of the house towards the kitchen door.

She watched him idly.

He returned and crossed the road, giving a letter to a white-capped maid at the opposite door.

Then he crossed over to her.

She rose and came forward to the steps in her soft white frock.

"Have you anything for me?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, standing sturdily before her, his pouch slung around to the front, his hat on the back of his head.

He handed her three envelopes, passed his sleeve over his perspiring face and went on down the road.

One was an advertisement of a new sort of hominy, one was the fishman's bill, and one the announcement of a new steam laundry.

Barbara went back to her chair and sat down.

The cricket still whirled in the grass; from the kitchen came the distant sounds of the cook's voice as she sang in endless repetition a popular song out of tune.

Barbara wondered how the children were getting along at school, what Craige was doing in the city. Her reverie drifted off almost into slumber in the stillness of the heat.

Idly she noticed the dust on the extended ankles of her openwork stockings. She wondered——

She roused herself with a start.

"The callyflower ain't come, ma'am!" said the cook from the doorway. "Shall I sind after it?"

"Yes," said Barbara.

She sank back into her revery.

It all seemed so long ago now—the time when she had rebelled. She smiled a little, a smile which would have made another woman cry.

Quite calmly she thought of Autran, of Miss Walsingham, of Bess Marguerite.

She went over in her memory the days of her girlhood, the Hallowe'en mischief, the talks with Bess, Autran of an evening sitting in front of the fire smoking his endless cigarettes, her old father droning Greek poetry of an afternoon in his library, the time when she had watched her two suitors fight in the snow, the time when she had leaned on the forward rail of the ferry-boat caught in the ice and seen the French steamer go out to the lands of dream, and heard the faint sound of the Marseillaise over the frozen water.

She thought of her wedding, of the

last talk with Bess Marguerite while the latter sat on the table.

She heard again the drone of the voice of the Reverend Tonnage at her wedding ceremony; she felt again the feeling that came to her on her wedding night, when she had stood at the window of the hotel looking out on the darkness, wondering what they were doing at home.

She lived over again in memory their first quarrel, the sword-fishing, the coming of the first child, Satterlee, the beginning of the disillusion, their second quarrel, the night in the iron works, the declaration in the snow, the many foolish oddities of her experience with her neighbours—Miss Walsingham——

She went over again the night when she had found she was growing old—the night of her appeal to Craige—the death of Miss Walsingham.

She thought over again the years of Craige's gradual ceasing to care, coming down to the news of yesterday (it seemed so long ago), the death of Autran, the scene in the place on Twenty-ninth Street.

The cricket whirred in the grass. A trolley car ground up the hill and passed up the tree-shaded avenue an hundred yards away at the curve of the road, its faint hum dying out in the distance.

She thought of Bess Marguerite, married to her aristocratic old count, in her palace in the fashionable part of Paris.

No, she, Barbara, would never see that! She had surrendered.

She knew now what her life would be. She saw, without any veil of dream or hope, along the pathway. She was to tread a pathway of sordid and commonplace days, without change or ambition or companionship, or even comprehension. She was poured into the mould of the average and she must take its measure. Circumstance had conquered her. The great leveling force of the world had rolled over her and broken her spirit. She had fought a long fight against the destiny of the majority, and love, hanging on her heart, had dragged her down. She had surrendered. Destiny was too strong for her. Sublime in endurance, silent in sac-

rifice, loyal in love, tender to miscomprehension, assiduous to sympathise and understand—pure, high, silent, pitying and brave—she was to go about her duties unhonoured in her pride. She had surrendered.

She sat, looking out at the sunlight.

From the kitchen the cook's voice came faintly through the noon-day stillness, singing the air of an old popular song, flat, out of key.

“Where you go, I go—
Out of the country of Sligo——”

The cricket whirred in the grass.

From away in the valley came the factory whistle's noon-day long-drawn, sordid, common note.

THE END



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